

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Euripides

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Brill's Companion to the Reception of Euripides

Edited by

Rosanna Lauriola and Kyriakos N. Demetriou



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Preface and Acknowledgements

Undoubtedly Classical Reception Studies is the most recent avenue to make Antiquity accessible and relevant to modern readers. Of the diverse products of Antiquity ancient Greek Tragedy has perhaps proved to be the most influential in the field of literature and the arts, from visual arts to dramatic performances and cinematic versions. Related scholarly works and networks of group research have accordingly flourished. Monographs or collections of essays from different contributors (either devoted to a single author and work, or to a specific geographic area of reception, or to a specific period of reception history, or to a specific field of reception), chapters on reception belonging to broader books or companions devoted to a single author (either to the whole *corpus* of the author's works or to a specific work of that author), and individual papers (with the academic journals increasingly granting major, or exclusive, space to the field of reception) are indeed uncountable.

To the best of our knowledge there is no comprehensive, and reliable account of the influence of all the extant Euripidean plays over the centuries (from Antiquity up to modernity), across cultures (from the strictly Indo-European/Western cultures to the more 'exotic' ones), and within a range of different areas of human knowledge and interest (from literature and visual arts to stage and screen, and so forth). Our *Companion to the Reception of Euripides* intends to fill this gap with a special effort to meet the needs of a varied readership: students, scholars, non-professional readers, people unfamiliar with either Euripides, in particular, or ancient Greek Tragedy and Antiquity in general, and people who have 'some grasp' of these subject matters.

To fulfil our goals, we have thought of structuring the volume by themes, i.e., according to some 'big' mythic topics and threads identifiable in Euripides' whole production. Privileging a thematic organization over a sequence of chapters arranged according to the chronology—often questionable—of each tragedy seemed to us to provide both a convenient way to deal with the richness and variety of Euripides' tragedies in a comprehensive manner, and a way to set an almost immediate 'big picture' of what Euripides' theatre is about, by just looking at the table of contents. While professional readers, scholars and students alike, would find familiar references to the varied aspects of Euripides' plays, within the 'big picture'-frame, lay readers would be encouraged to single out and explore the theme that might best address their interest and still see the 'big picture', and be intrigued by it.

The six thematic threads, which we have singled out, are: 1. *The Tragedies of War and Its Aftermath: The Trojan Cycle* ("Iphigenia at Aulis", "Trojan Women",

“Hecuba”, “Andromache”, “Helen”); 2. *Cursed Royal Families: The Mycenaean and Theban Cycle* (“Electra”, “Orestes”, “Iphigenia in Tauris”, “Phoenician Women”, “Suppliant Women”); 3. *The Fatal Power of Love* (“Alcestis”, “Medea”, “Hippolytus”); 4. *Questioning Gods and Religion* (“Bacchant Women”, “Appendix. Ion: A Quest”); 5. *The Tragic Side of Heracles’ Life* (“Heracles”, “The Children of Heracles”); 6. *Beyond Tragedy: A Satyr Drama* (“Cyclops”).¹ An Introductory chapter pertaining to Euripides’ life and a concluding set of Indices enclose these six sections.

As the titles chosen for the six sections might suggest, the thematic categorization has posed no small challenge, given the inevitable overlap of themes. “The Tragedies of War and its Aftermath”, for instance, would include the Mycenaean Cycle (as, indeed, it does, although partially, for it includes *Iphigenia at Aulis*) and the Theban Cycle, too. “Questioning Gods and Religion” can obviously apply to almost all the tragedies of Euripides. Similarly, some single tragedies that we have decided to include in a specific section might fit in well with other sections. *Iphigenia at Aulis*, for instance, would apparently fit Section 2 as well. Moreover, the possibility of identifying other thematic threads, with subsequently different clusters of tragedies, added to the challenge we faced while designing the structure of the volume. For instance, the common theme of supplication and the related celebration of 5th-century Athenian ideology identifiable in *Suppliant Women* and *The Children of Heracles* could have been singled out and been granted their own section. The same applies to the theme of the virgin’s self-sacrifice: common to *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and *The Children of Heracles*, it could have been easily singled out as well. And these examples could be multiplied—such is the richness of Euripides’ production. A balance between predominant theme and mythological affinity, whether through major characters (as, for instance, in the case of Heracles-tragedies) or through basic events, was thus sought as a criterion for selecting the thematic six sections-structure mentioned above. At the same time, to reduce the inevitable overlap and yet provide the reader with as much of a complete and harmonious blend of information as possible, cross-references have been used freely.

1 Although *Rhesus* is more or less consistently included in Euripides’ *corpus*, most recent scholarship has firmly demonstrated that Euripides’ authorship is untenable. Most likely this tragedy was composed in the mid 4th century BC: see Liapis, V. J. (2013) *A Commentary on the “Rhesus” Attributed to Euripides*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Fries, A. (2014) *Pseudo-Euripides, Rhesus* (edited with introduction and commentary). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. On this account, and additionally considering that some few ‘echoes’ identifiable mostly in post-Renaissance European art derive more likely from *Iliad* 10, we have decided not to include *Rhesus* in this volume.

To arrange the tragedies singled out for each thematic section in an intelligible sequence has posed another challenge. The lack of firm evidence for the date of each tragedy (with a very few exceptions) prevented us from adopting what is perhaps the most obvious choice, a chronological sequence. With this in mind and, once again, with the purpose of providing a unitary view, a thematic sequence, i.e., an arrangement that mirrors the order in which the episodes of the same 'big mythic event' followed (or were supposed to follow) one another, has been used wherever possible. Such is the case, for instance, with Sections 1, 2, and 5.² A preference for a sequence based on the chronology of the plays—uncertain as it can be—has prevailed where the theme that the tragedies share is not linked to a common 'big mythic event': such is the case with Section 3 and, relatively speaking, with Section 4.³

As for the inner structure of each chapter that, within its own thematic section, is devoted to a single tragedy, a 'thematic' organization rather than a chronological one has been also preferred. In this case the 'theme' corresponds to a field/area of reception. Each chapter is in fact articulated in paragraphs pertaining to the reception of the play in *Literature*, *Fine Arts* (subdivided, when possible, in 'Visual Arts', 'Music', and 'Dance') and *Stage and Screen*. Each chapter is also completed by two 'resource' paragraphs, one providing information on the major scholarly works about the reception of the specific tragedy, the other a selection of further readings, organized by field.

The ambiguous borders between some of the fields/areas of reception have, once again, posed a challenge. Aware that, for instance, a play is a *literary* text which belongs to the 'dramatic' *literary genre* and, as such, would find its place in both *Literature*- and *Stage*-paragraphs, relying on the details outlined by the available sources we have preferred the predominant features (whether *literary* or *performative*) of the work itself as the criterion for choosing the most appropriate paragraph. The same methodology applies to the subsections 'Music' and 'Dance,' which share a border with the paragraph devoted to the stage productions. Considering the conventional, and perhaps slightly arbitrary, features of these criteria, their use throughout the volume should,

2 To provide an example, in Section 1 *Iphigeneia at Aulis* comes first, although it is one of the later plays of Euripides (ca. 405 BC), composed after the others centering around the Trojan War. Its content, however, relates 'background'-events of that mythic war while the other tragedies of the section account for the later/final events: the aftermath of the war.

3 Relatively in that by strict chronology *Ion* should come first, then *Bacchant Women*. But from the reception point of view *Ion* can claim very little, which motivates its inclusion in an Appendix to the chapter: on this matter, see also below, p. xii.

however, not be expected to be fully consistent. Finally, the discussion in each paragraph is mainly organized chronologically.⁴

Consistency with the structure and goals of the volume and with the inner articulation of the chapter in the specific paragraphs described above is one of the major features of each contribution. Nonetheless, some degree of diversion has been granted to the contributors, occasionally allowing them, for instance, to privilege one period, or a literary genre, or an entire field of reception, over another. In a similar vein, where the flow of the discussion would make it more effective, they were allowed to opt for a thematic transition (from one work of reception to another) over a chronological one. The ensuing divergences have, however, been kept to a minimum. As one might expect, this could not apply to the length of the chapters: inevitably more space has been reserved for those tragedies that enjoyed a long and varied reception history as well as an almost uncontrollable abundance of bibliographic resources—which has posed no small challenge to each contributor, as far as a reasonable selection of items to be discussed was concerned. Additionally, the occasional absence of reception in a specific field (very often in ‘dance’ and even in ‘cinema’) has contributed to the different length of the chapters and, on occasion, to some narrow discussions. This is, in particular, the case with *Ion*, which has proved to be the one that enjoys the *least* reception among Euripides’ plays. It thus seemed to us interesting to investigate the reasons of such a ‘fate’ of Euripides’ *Ion*. In the end this kind of investigation, too, could shed light, as it did, on the ways the *receiving* culture and society have been dealing with this tragedy. This situation and the ensuing different structure of the essay have thus suggested us to include *Ion* in the form of an ‘Appendix’ to the section it shares with *Bacchant Women*.

A final note should be reserved for the introductory chapter devoted to Euripides’ life and for the final set of Appendix and Indices.

The introductory chapter is a *sui generis* account of Euripides’ life. With this volume being about the reception of the ancient playwright’s works, we

4 Perhaps the absence of a *In Translation*-paragraph might be surprising. Although aware that translation is both a form and a medium of reception (see, e.g., Venuti, S. L. [2000] *The Translation Studies Reader*, London, pp. 417–29; Hardwick, L. [2003] *Reception Studies. Greece and Rome. New Surveys in the Classics*, Oxford, pp. 9–10), not without some uneasiness, we decided to exclude it for the sake of the wider readership of our Companion. Nonetheless, a possibility to discuss some major translations, for their apparent impact on the reception history of the tragedy, was left to the contributor’s discretion.

welcomed the idea of the author of the chapter to account for the reception of Euripides' biographic information, provided by the ancient *Lives*, *in* and *through* a very modern medium: internet. The results are profoundly interesting. The web-biographies that have been identified and analyzed speak indeed of the way(s) in which "Euripides the man" is received by broader audiences whose selective preference for some details over others may prove to affect the interpretation and reception of the tragedies themselves.

As for the set of 'tools' which concludes this volume, beside the more commonly expected "Index Locorum" and "Index of Subjects", we decided to elaborate, in the form of an Appendix to the whole volume, a list of the 'Modern' adaptations which have been discussed for each tragedy. Beside itemizing each work (with her/his author and date), the list also provides the page (and note) numbers of the related discussion. By designing this Appendix in this way, we thought of its usefulness as it might serve as a 'database' and as a helm to easily navigate through the volume.

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R. Lauriola – K. Demetriou

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Introduction: The Life of Euripides

Elizabeth W. Scharffenberger

Antiquity has handed down several texts that purport to supply information about the life of Euripides. All have their genesis in the scholarly activities of the Hellenistic era (ca. 323–31 BC). The best known is the *Γένος Εὐριπίδου καὶ βίος* (*Origin and Life of Euripides*), a compilation of older accounts assembled in the Byzantine period (ca. 4th–15th century AD) and transmitted in some manuscripts of Euripides' tragedies.¹ Also important are: the entry on Euripides in the encyclopedia *Suda* (10th century AD); the summary of Euripides' life by the Byzantine scholar Thomas Magister; the brief report on the tragedian's life and times by the Latin author Aulus Gellius (ca. 125–180 AD) in *Attic Nights* (15.20); and the fragmentary remains of a dialogue concerning the life of Euripides by the Greek Peripatetic philosopher Satyrus of Calliatis, who was active in the late 3rd century BC.² Biographical details surface as well in works by Greek writers such as Plutarch (ca. 45–120 AD) and Diogenes Laertius (ca. 3rd century AD), and by Roman authors such as Cicero (106–43 BC) and Vitruvius (ca. 80–15 BC). Another useful source is the Parian Marble, which dates to the late 4th century BC.³ In addition, five letters attributed to Euripides, which scholars currently date to the 2nd century AD, present 'autobiographical' information from a fabricated first-person perspective.⁴

The *Lives* and the other biographical materials concerning Euripides form part of a larger tradition, already established in the classical period (5th–4th century BC), that was concerned with the origins, formative experiences, associations, achievements, travels, and deaths of famous men who made an impact in the areas of politics, poetry and the arts, culture, and philosophy. As is obviously the case with the biographical writings concerning Euripides, this tradition drew on a range of materials, some of which nowadays might

1 See e.g. Stevens (1956) 88; Campos Doraca (2007) 223–7.

2 The Greek texts and English translations of these sources, including the principal fragments of Satyrus' *Life*, can be found in Kovacs (1994a) 2–29; Campos Daroca et al. (2007) 253–91 supply annotated Spanish translations of the same materials. For the complete fragments of Satyrus' *Life*, see Schorn (2004) 86–113.

3 See the *testimonia* in Kovacs (1994a) 29–141.

4 Gosswein (1975) 6–12 discusses questions concerning the letters' authorship and dating.

not be deemed reliable sources of facts.⁵ Modern scholarship calls attention to the many fictive aspects of the *Lives* and other ancient biographical writings, and it is abundantly apparent that ancient writings about the life of Euripides, like the extant biographies of other prominent individuals, contain “many embellishments with which a later tradition, stimulated by the wondrous world of the plays, saw fit to garnish the little they knew.”⁶

The remark just quoted underscores the fact that ancient biographical works concerning an artist like Euripides were in their essence acts of reception, springing from the interest of later generations in the works of a past master. The *Lives* and other biographical materials concerning Euripides have in themselves become objects of interest. They have attracted welcome scholarly attention in the past century, especially since the discovery in the early 1900's of the papyrus fragments of Satyrus' dialogue.⁷ Euripides' life has moreover been the subject of works aimed at non-specialist as well as specialist audiences; we might single out Gilbert Murray's *Euripides and His Age* (1913), Marie Delcourt's *La Vie d'Euripide* (1930), and the chapter on Euripides in Edith Hamilton's *The Greek Way* (originally published in 1930) as examples of texts that seek to engage broad audiences by reconstructing the tragedian's personal experiences and showing how his dramas might be interpreted as products of a life lived in Athens from its mid-5th-century heyday through the Peloponnesian War. Curiosity about ‘Euripides the man,’ and hence about the life of Euripides, is also piqued by works both scholarly and general that do not have explicit interests in biography or the ancient biographical tradition. In particular, investigations of the tragedies' perspectives on religion, such as A. W. Verrall's influential *Euripides the Rationalist* (1895), and discussions of Euripides' ‘modernity’ and ‘iconoclasm,’ which associate his dramas with works by modern authors whose lives and views are well documented,⁸ give leave to wonder about Euripides as an individual with experiences, aspirations, beliefs, political opinions, intellectual commitments, and personal as well as professional disappointments.⁹

5 In accounts concerning Euripides' life, reliance on 5th-century comedies by Aristophanes and others is conspicuous. See e.g. Fornaro (1979); Leftkowitz (1979) 188–9 and 194–6; Kovacs (1994b) 3 and 11–2; Knöbl (2008) 17.

6 Rosenmeyer (1982) 372–3, in reference to the ancient biographical tradition of Aeschylus.

7 Regarding this, in addition to the works already cited, see Delcourt (1933); Fornaro (1977).

8 For example, George Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen, Luigi Pirandello, Bertold Brecht, and Edward Albee.

9 E.g. Salter (1911); Hamilton (1993) 205–14; Segal (1968) esp. 10–1; de Romilly (1986); Walton (2009). Ford (2005) examines the wide-ranging influence of Verrall (1895), and Hall/

The desire to understand the man who created the tragedies—the master behind the masterpieces, as it were—is no less strong today than it was two thousand years ago, and information from the ancient biographical works concerning Euripides has found many new outlets. ‘Lives’ of Euripides proliferate, especially in our era of electronic communications. Google searches for ‘Life of Euripides’ in July 2014 turned up almost two million hits,¹⁰ and the number would surely increase if one should try different search engines and use different languages for the search term. Exploring in full contemporary receptions of the ancient biographical tradition concerning Euripides would be a worthy undertaking, because impressions concerning the tragedian’s personal experiences can influence the reception and interpretation of his dramas. Such an extensive undertaking is not possible in this short essay, but a more modest project, which looks at a very small sample of modern ‘Lives,’ may nonetheless prove suggestive, and it may open the door to further investigation.

Web-biographies of Euripides constitute an important venue of reception of ancient biographical materials. Since such sites are freely accessible to anyone with a computer, they have the potential for reaching far broader audiences than the average scholarly work—a significant point of interest for those concerned with reception. Therefore, for its sample of modern ‘Lives,’ this essay will look to a handful of non-academic English-language websites that come up among the very first entries in Google searches for ‘Life of Euripides.’ My principal interest is in the ways the narratives on these webpages ‘receive’ details gleaned from the ancient sources.

Let us begin with a brief overview of the information in the ancient sources. A condensed summary of Euripides’ life, based on the *Origin and Life of Euripides*, might read as follows: Euripides was an Athenian, born in 480/79 BC; his father was named Mnesarchides, and his mother Cleito sold vegetables in the market. Because of an oracle his father heard, he was trained as a boxer before starting to write tragedies; his first theatrical competition was in 456/5 BC. He associated with prominent intellectuals, including Anaxagoras and Socrates. Some say that Socrates may have ghost-written some of his works, while others say that his lyrics were written by Cephisophon, a household slave who was sleeping with Euripides’ wife. Euripides introduced a number of dramatic innovations and produced ninety-two plays in total, winning first prize on five occasions. He studied painting, too. He had a cave on Salamis where he spent

Macintosh (2005) 488–520 examine Murray’s role in popularizing comparisons of Euripides and Shaw.

10 The total count was “approximately 1,920, 000” hits on July 27, 2014.

his time, avoiding the crowd. He appeared proud and stern and was not concerned with winning popular acclaim; he was resented by the Athenians and was the object of comedians' mockery, but was liked by foreigners. He hated laughter, and also hated women because of the misconduct of his two wives, Melito and Choerile, which led him to represent women unfavorably in his tragedies. The women of Athens consequently wanted to kill him. He had three sons. He left Athens for the court of King Archelaus of Macedonia, where he was killed by the king's hunting dogs. He was buried in Macedonia; he was more than seventy years old when he died.

This summary omits several details in the *Origin and Life of Euripides* and glosses over the repetitions and internal inconsistencies that betray its composite nature.¹¹ The narratives in the *Suda*, Aulus Gellius and Thomas Magister differ from the *Origin and Life of Euripides* and from each other on certain points. The *Suda* entry, for example, directly challenges the claim that Euripides' mother sold vegetables and asserts her noble ancestry. In general, however, the individual narratives contained in the *Origin and Life of Euripides* and the accounts of Aulus Gellius, the *Suda*, and Thomas Magister adopt comparable approaches to relating Euripides' life-story. All contain sensationalized details about the tragedian's personal quirks and problems—for example, his difficulties with his wives and consequent misogyny; his aloof, sullen personality and penchant for self-isolation; his rocky relationships with the Athenian people and with comedians like Aristophanes; his associations with Socrates and other 'intellectuals'; even his bad breath. And all paint a similar portrait of a man more at home on Salamis or in Macedonia than in Athens, who ended up dying violently.¹²

The Hellenistic biographical tradition that was the source of these texts doubtless sculpted its presentation of Euripides' life in a highly selective fashion, so as to achieve a maximal contrast with his rival and near contemporary Sophocles, who is presented in his *Life* as affable, devoted to public service, and universally beloved.¹³ Yet this tradition, despite its apparent dominance, does not seem to have gone unchallenged. Both Satyrus' fragmentary dialogue about Euripides' life and the Imperial-era collection of pseudo-correspondence seem

11 See e.g. Stephens (1956) 88; Kovacs (1994b) esp. 10–1, on problems of chronology.

12 Nestle (1898); Lefkowitz (1979) 196–7 and 202 note parallels between the stories of Euripides' spectacular death and the tale of the unusual demise of Aeschylus, supposedly killed in Sicily by a tortoise dropped from an eagle's beak.

13 E.g. Stevens (1956) 89; Knöbl (2008) 237. *Origin and Life*, ch. 34, explicitly contrasts Euripides and Sophocles.

designed to counter the image of the tragedian preserved in Aulus Gellius and the Byzantine texts. In addition, Satyrus' dialogue arguably highlights the shortcomings of the 'biographical approach' to interpreting Euripides' tragedies, which posits personal experiences as the causes of artistic choices and also relies on verses from the tragedies as evidence for biographical data.¹⁴ This 'biographical approach' is conspicuous in the treatment of several points of interest in the *Origin and Life of Euripides*, most notably in the claim that Euripides' domestic difficulties motivated the unfavorable representation of female figures in his tragedies.¹⁵

Different degrees of concern for methodology are also evident in the sample of web-biographies that I surveyed in my recent Google searches for the 'Life of Euripides.' In the following paragraphs, I give brief overviews of the biographical information presented on five sites, which came up as the first five hits (excluding sites with obvious academic affiliations) in these searches. These overviews are followed by a short discussion that introduces, for comparative purposes, some material from a few other sites that were among the first ten hits in my searches.

1) <http://www.biography.com/people/euripides-9289335>: This brief account, on the A&E television network's website, relies on the information from the Parian Marble for the date of Euripides' birth ("around 485 BC"), and prefaces its account of Euripides' life with the disclaimer that "[v]ery few facts of Euripides's life are known for certain." The names of Euripides' parents and first wife are specified, as is the number of sons; the suggestion that his family was prosperous is presented with slight tentativeness, as "very likely." Two paragraphs later, it is claimed without qualification that the tragedian "was acquainted with many of the important philosophers of the 5th century BC, including Socrates, Protagoras and Anaxagoras, and he owned a large personal library." The departure from Athens and death in Macedonia are reported in the next paragraph, without mention of Archelaus' dogs.

14 Knöbl (2008) 134–88 (on Satyrus) and 189–258 (on the letters). Cf. Lefkowitz (1979) 205 on the "sense of debate" in Satyrus, and Hannink (2010) on the "rewriting" of "Euripides' biographical tradition" in the letters.

15 In his *Life of Euripides* (39 IX 25–6 Schorn), Satyrus appears to identify the comic dramatist Aristophanes (ca. 450–380 BC) as a forerunner, or perhaps originator, of the 'biographical approach' to interpreting Euripides' tragedies. For a discussion of this passage in Satyrus with additional bibliography, see Lauriola (2010) 89 with n. 9.

2) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euripides>: The lengthy Wikipedia entry on Euripides supplies many footnotes and detailed references to recent as well as older scholarship in English. Its introduction and the following section titled 'Life' recapitulates information available in the ancient sources in detail. These two sections report (among other things) that Euripides studied "philosophy under the masters Prodicus and Anaxagoras," and there are references to his "disastrous marriages," retreat to Salamis, "voluntary exile in old age,"¹⁶ and death in Macedonia. Once in the introduction and twice again in the section titled 'Life,' at its beginning and end, there are caveats about the unreliability of the ancient biographical sources, and two concluding sentences in the introduction suggest that Euripides may never have visited Macedonia and may have died in Athens.

The section titled 'Life' floats the possibility that the extant tragedies, when "sequenced in time," reveal changes in Euripides' "outlook" and provide a "spiritual biography" including periods of "patriotism," "disillusionment with war," "escapism," and finally "tragic despair." But the subsequent paragraph casts doubts on the prospect of recovering such "spiritual biography."

3) <http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc4.htm>: This web-biography includes no acknowledgement of ancient sources or modern scholarship, and the sources of its information about the life of Euripides are not specified.¹⁷ But its description of Euripides' life repeats several details familiar from the *Origin and Life of Euripides*, emphasizing in its first paragraph the tragedian's lack of success in dramatic competitions, which is explained as follows:

But Euripides was ignored by the judges of the Greek festival because he did not cater to the fancies of the Athenian crowd. He did not approve of their superstitions and refused to condone their moral hypocrisy. He was a pacifist, a free thinker, and a humanitarian in an age when such qualities were increasingly overshadowed by intolerance and violence. Perhaps that is why he chose to live much of his life alone with his books in a cave on the island of Salamis.

16 Cf. "voluntary exile" in Murray (1913) 166.

17 The entry on <http://www.famousauthors.org/euripides> contains information very similar to what is presented on this site, at times with identical phrasing. But it is impossible to tell whether www.famousauthors.org borrowed from www.imagi-nation.com, or vice versa. Differently, for instance, the entry on <http://www.123helpme.com/assets/11483.html> explicitly acknowledges debts to "www.imagi-nation.com."

In subsequent paragraphs, Euripides' "love of truth" and questioning of religion are linked to his youthful exposure to Anaxagoras and the "profound effect" exerted upon him by "the radical philosopher." It is claimed that he "did not shy away from the social issues of the time" and was committed to "exposing the evils of his society." The entry's penultimate paragraphs describe Euripides as a "strange, secluded little man," the "continual butt of comic poets," whose life began to "fall apart around him" as his wife's adultery became public knowledge, and "[o]ne by one, his closest friends were banished and murdered by the State for their liberal views." A trial for impiety is said to have forced Euripides to leave Athens "in a cloud of controversy" for Macedonia, where he was torn to pieces by Archelaus' dogs.

4) http://www.theatredatabase.com/ancient/euripides_001.html: This website advertises that its entry on Euripides is excerpted from a text dating to 1935.¹⁸ The first paragraph claims that ancient sources purvey "more unadulterated gossip about Euripides than about either Sophocles or Aeschylus." At the end of this paragraph, the reliance on "invention" in the biographical tradition is said to be in the service of "connect[ing] the poet's writings with supposed personal experiences and thus assign[ing] a reason for them." The very next paragraph begins with this confident assertion:

From all the confusion a few facts stand out. Euripides in temperament was just the opposite of Sophocles . . . of a studious and retiring disposition, fond of the companionship of intimate friends, but averse to general society. A favorite retreat was a grotto that looked out upon the sea. Here in complete retirement he liked to study and write.

A separate entry on the 'Peculiarities of Euripidean Drama,' available through a link on the main page (<http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/euripides003.html>),¹⁹ asserts in its opening paragraph:

Far from approving the destructive tendencies of the time, [Euripides] held aloof from public life on principle, and his private life was blameless; but he was permeated through and through with that spirit of boundless subjectivity and the skeptical moral paralysis resulting from it, which was the special characteristic of the age of ochlocracy.

¹⁸ Fort and Kates (1935) 18.

¹⁹ The text is credited to Bates (1906) 168–72. This link is also accessible via <http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/euripides007.html>.

The subsequent paragraphs of this entry claim that Euripides “did not wish . . . to rise to the level of the idealistic conceptions of his predecessors,” and that he did “not hesitate to put in [his characters’] mouths all the questions, thoughts and problems which were then wildly surging through the brains of his fellow Athenians and himself.”

5) <http://www.gradesaver.com/author/euripides/>: The first paragraph of this entry acknowledges that little is known about the life of Euripides. The entry relays just two biographical details familiar from the ancient *Lives*, concerning Euripides’ lack of professional success and his departure for Macedonia in 408 BC, which is tentatively explained as a reaction to the “danger in Athens” the tragedian may have faced for “his subversive ideas.” It is said as well that Euripides questioned “authority” and also “hollow or hypocritical ideals,” and that he “reveal[ed] a fascination with the oppressed, including women, barbarians, and slaves.” To this is appended the remark, “His is a voice of conscience, unafraid to reveal the world underneath Athens’ veneer of cultural and social advancement.”

None of these web-biographies directly quotes ancient sources, and it seems a fair assumption that their debts to the ancient biographies are mediated through scholarly and popular writings of our own era. Of the top ten hits in my searches for the ‘Life of Euripides,’ only Wikipedia (n. 2, above) and one other site²⁰ refer to recent scholarship (i.e., from the 1960’s through early 2000’s). The entries on theatredatabase.com (n. 4, above) and its related links explicitly acknowledge older scholarship as sources, and, given the absence of copyright restrictions on material over seventy-five years old, it seems reasonable to assume that the narratives on most of the other sites are likewise derived, directly or indirectly, from materials dating to the 1930’s and earlier.²¹

Indeed, the virtually identical backstories that most of these web-biographies present, as they flesh out the narratives of the ancient sources, are very familiar to readers of A. W. Verrall, Gilbert Murray, Edith Hamilton, and other early 20th-century popularizers of the general view of Euripides as a writer ‘ahead of his time.’²² The focal interest on the majority of sites I visited is

20 <http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/medeaeuripides/p/Euripides.htm>.

21 In some web-biographies, debts to materials from the 19th and early 20th centuries are likely mediated through other sources, including other web-biographies. Web-biographies do not always acknowledge their sources, complicating efforts to analyze the precise ‘paths’ of their reception of information concerning the life of Euripides.

22 The restrained presentation on A&E’s Biography site (item n. 1: above, p. 5) is an exception to this trend. The Wikipedia entry (item n. 2: above, p. 6) seems to be a partial

Euripides' unpopularity among his fellow citizens; hence the details from the ancient sources that are most frequently mentioned are his retreat to Salamis (cave optional), his departure for Macedonia before his death (death-by-dog also optional), and the small number of first prizes he won despite his considerable output. The reasons for Euripides' failure to achieve acclaim in his lifetime are generally embellished in detail—far beyond what is presented in the ancient sources—and the different sites present a remarkably consistent portrait of the relations between the artist and his public. The tragedian is said to have traveled in rarified intellectual circles and to have “loved truth”; he disapproved of his fellow citizens' “hypocrisy,” “superstitions,” and “demoralized ways” and became disillusioned by the “destructive tendencies of the time”; he “questioned authority” and exposed “the evils of his society”; he was a free-thinking pacifist who could not brook the “intolerance and violence” of his contemporaries. The Athenians, in turn, are presented as resistant to Euripides' “subversive” ideas and possible atheism. In general, the web-biographies make claims wholly consonant with the image of the tragedian as an embodiment of the liberal ideals of the post-Victorian era, citing his “genuine sympathy for suffering humanity,”²³ his commitment to “human rights during a time when most people did not agree with the idea,”²⁴ and his “fascination with the oppressed.” Details about his failed marriages, derived from the ancient sources, and about other personal trials unattested in these sources add depth to the portrait of a brave artist struggling, despite adversity, to remain true to his values.²⁵ The urge to make authoritative claims seems too strong to resist, as is evidenced in one entry's awkward juxtaposition of caveats about “unadulterated gossip” inherited from antiquity with statements of “facts” concerning Euripides' “studious and retiring disposition.”²⁶ Not surprisingly, given their emphasis on the tragedian's forward-looking views, reports of Euripides' hatred of women, which a scholar like Murray takes pains to explain away,²⁷ are among the few details from the ancient sources that the web-biographies rarely mention.

exception; its caveats about the unreliability of the ancient sources are not well-integrated into its extensive, detailed narrative of Euripides' life. The inconsistent feel of the Wikipedia entry is perhaps a consequence of its serial construction by different authors with differing points of view.

23 <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Du-Fi/Euripides.html#b>, not discussed above.

24 <http://www.123helpme.com/assets/11483.html>, not discussed above; cf. Hamilton (1993) 205–7.

25 The narrative on <http://www.imagi-nation.com> (n. 3, above) about the way Euripides' life “fell apart” is particularly eye-catching.

26 http://www.theatredatabase.com/ancient/euripides_001.html (item n. 4: above, p. 7).

27 Murray (1913) 31–4.

If ancient biographical writings concerning Euripides contain “many embellishments,”²⁸ the same must be said of their descendants on the Internet, which selectively present information in ways that mirror the ‘sculpting’ of biographical details in ancient sources.²⁹ It is plain that the story of Euripides’ life was continually transformed and reinvented in antiquity, with certain details selected for emphasis,³⁰ and we might conclude that today’s web-biographies do nothing more than participate in a long-established tradition of reinvention and selection. These web-biographies, then, are markedly old-fashioned, all the more so because many of them embrace the interpretative methodology of reading the tragedian’s life through his plays and his plays through his life—an approach that is the cornerstone of not only the Hellenistic biographical tradition, but also much early 20th-century writing on Euripides.³¹ The dependence of web-biographies on the narratives of Euripides’ life supplied by older scholarship, and their disregard for more recent studies that question the reliability of assumptions concerning Euripides’ unpopularity and ‘iconoclasm,’³² reinforce impressions of old-fashionedness. Copyright restrictions doubtless play a key role in determining this dependence, and an argument emerges here for greater accessibility—and more open-sourcing—of up-to-date scholarship. At the same time, we might wonder whether contemporary web-biographies of Euripides also speak to the abiding appeal of the Romantic conception of the ‘person of genius,’ which exerted a palpable influence on the presentations of Euripides’ life by scholars like Verrall, Murray, and Hamilton, and still resonates today. Stories about the artist who pushes buttons and boundaries continue to captivate, especially if that artist must transcend personal trials and face down a recalcitrant public. The values that these web-biographies attribute to Euripides—truthfulness, commitment to human rights, sympathy with suffering humanity—remain, moreover, broadly admired. Perhaps what the biographies available on the Internet collectively offer is not merely the ‘Life of Euripides’ made convenient by copyright laws. They also offer up, I suggest, the ‘Life of Euripides’ that is still very much in demand—and that, because of its powerful appeal, exerts considerable influence on the reception of Euripides’ dramas in our own time.

28 Rosenmeyer (1982) 372–3; see above, n. 6.

29 The web-biographies’ omission of references to the tragedian’s purported misogyny is an excellent example of such selectivity.

30 Knöbl (2008) 15.

31 E.g., Leftkowitz (1979) 194–6; cf. Kovacs (1994b) 35.

32 E.g., Stevens (1956); Leftkowitz (1979); Kovacs (1994b); also Franco (1986); Gregory (1991); Mathiessen (2004).

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PART 1

The Tragedies of War and Its Aftermath:
The Trojan Cycle



Iphigenia at Aulis

Mary-Kay Gamel

Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis is full of reversals. Before the play starts the Greek fleet has assembled at Aulis to sail to Asia Minor and attack Troy, but the winds are not blowing. Agamemnon, the leader of the expedition, has been informed by a prophet that Artemis demands the sacrifice of Agamemnon's eldest child Iphigenia in order to make the voyage and the victory possible. Agamemnon has written to his wife Clytemnestra, ordering her to send Iphigenia to Aulis, telling her Achilles wants to marry the girl. As the play starts, Agamemnon has changed his mind and sends off a letter cancelling his previous instructions. But his brother Menelaus, whose wife Helen has left him for Trojan prince Paris, intercepts the letter and confronts Agamemnon. They argue furiously when suddenly a Messenger arrives to announce that Iphigenia, Clytemnestra and baby Orestes have arrived in the camp. At this point both Menelaus and Agamemnon reverse their positions: Menelaus urges his brother not to carry out the sacrifice, but Agamemnon now insists that he has no choice—Iphigenia must die. Clytemnestra and Iphigenia enter; Agamemnon tries to convince his wife to go home, but she refuses. Achilles enters and meets Clytemnestra, who greets him as her future son-in-law, which mystifies him; now an old slave tells her that Agamemnon plans to sacrifice his daughter. The distraught mother begs Achilles to save Iphigenia, but he waffles. Clytemnestra threatens Agamemnon and Iphigenia begs him to spare her, but Agamemnon stands firm. Achilles now returns and promises to defend Iphigenia even at the cost of his own life, but Iphigenia has now changed her mind and leaves ready to die for the glory of Greece, ordering her mother and the Chorus not to weep for her. The Chorus praise her courage and the play seems to be over, but in another twist a Messenger arrives to describe how at the moment of sacrifice Iphigenia vanished, a deer died on the altar in her place, and a priest declared that Artemis had saved the girl. Agamemnon goes off to war, but Clytemnestra doubts the miracle.

In its frequently changing course this plot asks many questions. What is the value of an individual life, and under what circumstances can that life be taken? Does Artemis actually demand Iphigenia's sacrifice? Is Agamemnon justified in agreeing to sacrifice his daughter? Is Iphigenia braver than Achilles? Why does she change her mind? Is her decision to offer herself an act of heroic patriotism,

acceptance of the inevitable, or delusion? Is the war for which she is to be sacrificed a worthy cause, or pointless waste of both Greek and Trojan lives? Is Iphigenia actually rescued by divine action?

*These questions are made more difficult by the state of the text, which is so uncertain—more than any other Greek drama—that what actually happened onstage in its initial performance is not clear. Problems in meter, citations of the play by other authors which do not appear in existing manuscripts, and illogicalities and inconsistencies have led editors to make extensive rearrangements, revisions, and excisions.¹ The most important questions involve the final scene, since Artemis does not appear as *dea ex machina* to make everything clear. It is worth remembering that Euripides frequently ends his plays in surprising ways, as with the *dei ex machina* in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Helen*, and *Orestes*. Is the miraculous substitution true? Or, as Clytemnestra says, is the story a lie designed to make her give up her rage at her husband?*

The many questions which spring from these plot and character reversals, combined with the textual uncertainties, have provoked a wealth of responses from critics, scholars, and later artists. From the standpoint of reception studies, instead of offering problems that need to have definitive solutions, such questions offer wonderful opportunities for exploration and creativity.²

In Literature

Both Aeschylus and Sophocles wrote plays called *Iphigenia*, but only fragments remain. Euripides' play is very different from the sacrifice described by the Chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 198–250 (458 BC), in which Iphigenia is gagged so that she cannot curse her father. Euripides was awarded first prize for *Iphigenia at Aulis* at the Festival of Dionysos in 405 or 404. The prize, one of only five he received out of many entries in the tragedy competition, was posthumous.

In his *Poetics* Aristotle mentions *Iphigenia at Aulis*, but critically: despite his belief in the importance of *peripeteia* (reversal) in a tragic plot, he insists that characters must have consistency (*to homalon*), and says “the girl who begs her father to spare her is not at all like the character who later appears” (1454a 33). Like so many statements in this document it raises more questions than it

¹ Page (1934); Gurd (2005); Kovacs (2010) 1–21; Michelakis (2006) 105–14.

² In what follows I focus on materials which have not been extensively treated in other discussions, particularly recent American ones.

answers: why cannot Iphigenia have learned from her experiences and therefore changed her mind?³

A play based on *Iphigenia at Aulis*, of which only fragments remain, is attributed to the Roman poet Ennius (203–169 BC). The single largest fragment clearly suggests that here a chorus of Greek soldiers has been substituted for the women from Chalcis in Euripides' drama. Such a change can be seen as tightening the script, since the soldiers' words and actions can be shown instead of described as they complain about their forced inaction, but it probably also removed the Euripidean chorus' gradual questioning of the war and its costs. As we will see, other later examples of reception make this same choice, either adding or substituting a chorus of soldiers.⁴ The Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius (1st century BC) uses Iphigenia early in *De Rerum Natura* ("On the Nature of Things"), his didactic poem celebrating Epicurean philosophy, as an example of how "religion has generated criminal, impious deeds" (1. 83). Since Epicureanism held that gods exist but do not involve themselves in human affairs, Lucretius rejects the idea of the goddess saving Iphigenia; instead, the Greek leaders "foully polluted the altar of Diana" with the girl's blood (1. 84–5). Here Iphigenia is a victim, not an agent; she does not even have to be gagged to avoid her cursing her murderers as she collapses "silent with terror" (1. 92). Cicero (well-known Roman orator, politician, philosopher, 1st century BC), by contrast, celebrates her as a patriot who "orders that she be led to death so that enemies' blood might be drawn forth by her blood" (*Tusculanae Disputationes* ["Tusculan Disputations"] 1. 116). The Augustan poet Ovid makes use of the story in two passages in his *Metamorphoses*, 12. 1–38 and 13. 181–95. Each of these passages questions—more subtly than Lucretius—the meaning of the sacrifice. In the first passage Ovid writes: *pietatem publica causa/rexque patrem vicit* ("the public good defeated right thinking and the king overcame the father," 12. 29–30) and as Iphigenia stands before the altar he states: *victa dea est nubemque oculis obiecit et . . . supposita fertur mutasse Mycenida cerva* ("the goddess was overcome and cast a shadow over their eyes and (it is said) exchanged Iphigenia for a deer," 12. 32, 34). The inclusion of *fertur* ("it is said") undercuts certainty: did the goddess really save Iphigenia, or is it just a rumor? Diana (= Artemis) was "softened by the slaughter" (*lenita est caede*)—does it matter whose blood was shed? In the second passage Ulysses boasts of having overcome Agamemnon's fatherly feelings by his rhetoric. Here, as so often in this poem, human beings' understanding, natural affection, and sense of morality are weak, easily manipulated and overcome by more

3 As Michelakis (2006) 115 points out, Aristotle elsewhere praises Iphigeneia's decision.

4 On Ennius' play see Kovacs (2010) 197–206.

powerful forces, whether political necessity, divine fiat, or carefully prepared, deceptive words.

After Ennius, for more than a thousand years, the reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis* does not take a dramatic form, at least not as a complete play.⁵ When the play was first printed, however, in the 1503 Aldine edition of all seventeen plays by Euripides, it was quickly translated into Latin by the well-known Humanist Erasmus (1506), into Italian by Ludovico Dolce (1543–1547), and into English by Lady Jane Lumley (1558; the first English translation of a Greek tragedy).⁶ The most important genre of any play's reception is translations and adaptations for the stage—especially those which have actually been staged. The first production of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, called *Mordopffer der göttin Diane, mit der jungkfraw Ephigeneie* ("Death Sacrifice to the goddess Diana, with the virgin Iphigenia") by the German playwright Hans Sachs, took place in Nuremberg in 1555. Thereafter come scripts by various authors in various languages: Samuel Coster produced a version which attacked Dutch Calvinists 1617, and Jean Rotrou, an author who frequently worked on classical themes, a version in Paris 1640.⁷

The next major text was the 17th century-French dramatist Jean Racine's *Iphigénie* (1674), staged in Versailles as part of a celebration of a military victory by Louis XIV. Racine was both a royalist and a rationalist, so while he felt that the noble, innocent Iphigenia could not be sacrificed, he found her miraculous salvation by Artemis/Diana too absurd and incredible for his audience. His solution was to introduce a substitute victim, Eriphile, daughter of Helen and Theseus, who is captured by Achilles and falls in love with him, but he gives her to Iphigenia as a kind of engagement present (in this version Achilles wants to marry Iphigenia and she him). Eriphile schemes to disrupt the marriage and secure Achilles for herself. When the sacrifice plot is revealed, Iphigenia defends her father, says she is ready to die, and goes to be sacrificed. Odysseus now appears and describes to Clytemnestra how, as Achilles and his men prepared to interfere, the seer Calchas declared that the victim the gods demanded is really Eriphile, who stabs herself on the altar. These are clearly major revisions to Euripides' script. The war is never questioned, and the moral and political issues raised in the Greek play are replaced by conflicts

5 There are allusions in some medieval authors: see Reid (1993) 1: 599–600.

6 On Lumley's translation see Purkiss (1998) and Kovacs (2010) 224–9.

7 The short list provided above is from the *Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama* (APGRD).

aroused by romantic love.⁸ The play ends with Clytemnestra thanking the gods and the family reunited, with none of the allusions in *Iphigenia at Aulis* to Clytemnestra's future revenge on Agamemnon (especially 1171–93).

Racine's bold reshaping of the Euripidean script encouraged other artists to follow his example, especially composers.⁹ These are primarily European, not British, artists. It seems that royalist Catholic culture found the events of *Iphigenia at Aulis* (especially the daughter's filial duty and the divine intervention) more sympathetic than did the English.¹⁰ Yet it should be noted that the "more serious" Iphigenia appeared on British stages more than any other Greek tragic figure in the period between 1660 and 1734.¹¹

In the 19th century poets evoke the obedient daughter. For instance, Alfred Lord Tennyson depicts an Iphigenia angry at Helen rather than her father in *A Dream of Fair Women* (1832). In Walter Savage Landor's poetic dialogue *Pericles and Aspasia* (1836), Agamemnon is reunited with his daughter in the underworld; she welcomes him tenderly and seems to have forgotten her violent death. In his short poem *Iphigenia at Aulis* (1865), William James Linton describes Achilles convinced by Iphigenia to accept the sacrifice.

The subject continued to attract poets during the 20th century.¹² Most of these, however, question the justice of the sacrifice. For instance, Zbigniew Herbert, a Polish poet who often writes on mythical topics, concludes his poem *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia* (1977) with the reference to "the chorus" suggesting a drama and the "proper perspective" apparently an aesthetic spectacle:¹³

The chorus placed on the hillside takes in the world with its correct proportions. The small shining bush of the pyre, white priests, purple kings, loud copper and the miniature fires of soldiers' helmets, all this against a background of bright sand and the immense colour of the sea.

The view is superb, with the help of the proper perspective.

American Catholic writer Thomas James Merton's *Iphigenia: Politics*¹⁴ (1944) ends with:

8 See Mueller (1980) 38–45.

9 See below, pp. 27–8.

10 Hall (2005) 4–5.

11 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 33.

12 Reid (1993) 1: 604–5, lists nine poems; Kossman (2001) 220–3 includes three of those and two more; DeNicola (1999) 65, 74–5 adds another two.

13 Kossman (2001) 220–1.

14 Kossman (2001) 221–2.

This is the way the ministers have killed the truth, our daughter,
 Steps lead back into the rooms we fear to enter;
 Our minds are bleaker than the hall of mirrors:

And the world has become a museum.

Responses to Euripides' play start to change in the 20th century. In 1916 American poet H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) was writing choral lyrics from *Iphigenia at Aulis* in a distinctively modern idiom: "A flash—Achilles passed across the beach."¹⁵ In 1943, in the midst of the Second World War, Gerhart Hauptmann, renowned German dramatist and novelist, published *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which became the first play in *Die Atriden-Tetralogie*, a kind of *Oresteia* involving all three of Agamemnon's children. The meaning of this complex, fascinating work by a writer deeply implicated in the National Socialist government is much debated.¹⁶ The final play in the trilogy (but the first one written) is called *Iphigenia in Delphi*. Here should be reconciliation and redemption: the three siblings come together, but only Orestes and Electra get absolution. As in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* there is a movement from old to new, from dark to light, from divine to human, but here Iphigenia is a semi-divine priestess, not of Artemis but Hecate, and she rejects this change, throwing herself off a cliff. It has been argued that this is Hauptmann's "symbolic way of saying . . . that the death and fear in the Hecatean world . . . still persists, no matter how forgotten or repressed, in the depths and hidden recesses of the historical human world, ready at all times to break out anew."¹⁷ If this interpretation is correct, the tetralogy was not Nazi propaganda but a dark existential meditation.

In 1951 the American poet and translator Kenneth Rexroth composed a verse tetralogy entitled *Beyond the Mountains*, which includes *Iphigenia at Aulis*. It is a chamber piece with three characters (Agamemnon, Iphigenia, Achilles), two small choruses. Iphigenia and Achilles are lovers, as are she and Agamemnon, there is much soft-core porn dialogue ("Between your thighs/ Is a nest of nightingales")¹⁸ and dances stand in for intercourse. There is little focus on the political or ethical issues. Achilles knows nothing of the sacrifice, and Agamemnon tries to dissuade Iphigenia: "Why waste the youth of Greece to ruin Troy?/I would rather we turn back. You're worth more/Than Helen,

15 The quotation is from Doolittle (1916).

16 Hamburger (1969) 69–90; Hermann (2005) 27–53; Linton (2008); Hall (2012) 217–20.

17 Hamburger (1969) 89–90.

18 Rexroth (1951) 90.

more than any victory.”¹⁹ But she insists: “I am sacrificing myself/To myself;” “I die by my own values;” “I conquer Troy./ “I marry the burning daylight”²⁰ and leaves. The Chorus apparently approves: “Heaven has taken her. She/Has gone into the bright world” and in his Author’s Note Rexroth states “Iphigenia marches straight to transcendence” which in this context suggests that death is the great orgasm.²¹

In 1958 the University of Chicago Press published *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, a project now in its third edition: “Sixty years ago, the University of Chicago Press undertook a momentous project: a new translation of the Greek tragedies that would be the ultimate resource for teachers, students, and readers. They succeeded. Under the expert management of eminent classicists David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, those translations combined accuracy, poetic immediacy, and clarity of presentation to render the surviving masterpieces of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in an English so lively and compelling that they remain the standard translations.”²² Some of these scripts—especially those by the few translators who are classical scholars with poetic and dramatic gifts, such as Richmond Lattimore and William Arrowsmith—remain readable and even playable (note that the blurb above makes no mention of performance), but Charles R. Walker’s translation of *Iphigenia at Aulis* is not one of these. Fortunately there has been an explosion of translations and adaptations since the Chicago series and the variety indicates the range of responses to this important script. Of the translations, Willian S. Merwin and George E. Dimock’s (1978) is part of an Oxford series which pairs scholars with poets; in verse throughout, it is limpid, but has none of Euripides’ tonal variety. Far better are Paul Roche’s and Don Taylor’s lively verse translations (1998), which convey the different voices and shifting moods and include helpful stage directions. Here is Roche’s Agamemnon after Clytemnestra refuses to go home: “Dammit! A useless move,/ This attempt to get my wife out of sight.”²³ Taylor catches Achilles’ pompous narcissism perfectly when the sacrifice plot is revealed and Clytemnestra begs him to save Iphigenia:²⁴

19 Rexroth (1951) 80.

20 Rexroth (1951) 76, 81, 91.

21 Rexroth (1951) 91, 99.

22 <http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/series/CGT.html>

23 Roche (1998) 244.

24 Taylor (1998) 44.

All my most noble qualities are inflamed
 To immediate action: but I am mature enough
 To understand the virtues of moderation, both
 In the anguish of grief and the exhilaration of triumph.

Achilles' "moderation" consists of doing nothing more than advising Clytemnestra to beg Agamemnon not to kill the child; if she succeeds, "I need not be involved at all" and she responds bitterly: "If the gods/Exist at all, they must surely reward/ Such a principled stand as yours."²⁵

Poet Elaine Terranova's very free translation also appeared in 1998. Mine, with introduction and notes, was published in 1999; though not written with the stage in mind it has been used in three productions. Random House/Modern Library is about to issue a new series of sixteen Greek tragedies; *Iphigenia at Aulis* is not among them, but will probably appear in a succeeding volume.

Adaptations are usually more interesting than translations, and in terms of adaptations in the last two centuries *Iphigenia at Aulis* has also inspired fiction. A mention should be reserved for the novel *The Songs of the Kings* by Booker Prize-winning British writer Barry Unsworth, published in 2003. Euripides keeps Odysseus offstage, and Agamemnon describes him as arousing the army against himself (*Iphigenia at Aulis* 524–33). Unsworth shows a wily Odysseus, driven by economic need, enjoying his ability to convince the weak king that he has no other choice, that he will increase his glory by putting the war ahead of his family. Unsworth includes the two eagles killing and devouring the pregnant hare and her offspring, and the meaning of this is the subject of extensive debate. In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* the seer Calchas remains offstage, described as insisting Iphigenia must be sacrificed (ll. 358–9). Here he is uncertain, afraid to reveal his belief that the goddess Artemis is angry at the destruction the war will bring to both sides. Unsworth boldly uses contemporary references and colloquialisms—"CV," "cost-effectiveness," "lost his marbles," "light at the end of the tunnel," Agamemnon as "Commander-in-Chief." Potential connections with the 2003 Allied invasion of Iraq are exploited, as when Menelaus says that the "Asians" "are kept in ignorance and superstition . . . they have the wrong gods. Now we could save them from that . . . we could set about civilizing the population and changing their ways" (p. 282).²⁶ At Aulis the wind is blowing against the fleet, but it stops before Iphigenia arrives. The chiefs debate what to do, but the clinching argument is "The whole army is waiting for Iphigeneia. . . . It is the prospect of the show

25 Taylor (1998) 48.

26 All page numbers refer to Unsworth (2003).

itself that has held them together . . . If we cheat the out of it now, we'll have a full-scale mutiny on our hands" (p. 283). Iphigenia is arrogant, self-absorbed, status-conscious; offered a chance to save herself she insists "Only great people have destiny" and hers is to support the war (p. 332). A crucial element throughout is epic songs, portrayed as a medium for influencing public opinion. The Singer has been "politely but very firmly" asked to "keep the just cause of the war well to the forefront of men's minds" (p. 71). Singers, Calchas scoffs, "have interests to serve . . . their Songs are about what people already believe or what it is wished they should believe." (p. 224) But at one point the Singer sings a story very similar to the Greeks' situation (pp. 293–6) and then comments, "Some say this, some that. There is always another story. . . . But it is the stories told by the strong, the songs of the kings, that are believed in the end." Unsworth is a singer who makes sure that his audience thinks about alternatives to the official version.

The late 20th century saw the appearance of a new fiction genre, the graphic novel, which boasts an *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Starting in 1998, American comics artist Eric James Shanower has produced *Age of Bronze*, an incredibly ambitious project drawing on not only the Homeric texts and Greek drama but many other sources ancient and later. The individual issues are gradually appearing in collected form, and the Iphigenia story appears in the 2004-volume 2, under the title *Sacrifice* (pp. 150–214). Clearly much research has gone into Shanower's strong black-and-white drawings: the costumes and hair styles reflect Minoan art, the buildings and ships are historically accurate. Although there are deviations from Euripides' script (e.g., Odysseus is sent to bring Iphigenia to Aulis), Shanower's presentation is inherently dramatic—each page has up to eight frames, most of which consist of characters interacting—and much of the action and dialogue is taken directly from the play, such as Menelaus and Agamemnon exchanging their positions on the sacrifice. There is even a five-person Chorus of women from Chalcis (though only for a couple of pages). When Agamemnon resists the idea of the sacrifice Odysseus threatens to return home, Agamemnon realizes that the curse on the Atreus family has caught up with him ("our family history is full of each generation preying on the next"),²⁷ and agrees to the sacrifice for Menelaus' sake. There are also frames without dialogue, often striking, such as images from nature immediately after the killing stroke. Shanower devises a clever answer to the problem of representing the wind: throughout the episode the letters SHSHSHSH divide the top, middle and bottom frames on each page (the wind stops when Iphigenia

27 Shanower (2004) 159; the following page is entirely taken up with images of this inter-generational violence with the figures coiled in Agamemnon's hair.

leaves her mother). Like Unsworth, Shanower inserts the episode of the pregnant hare and the interpretation of the two eagles devouring it. When Achilles meets Clytemnestra and Iphigenia he understands who the sacrificial victim is (Shanower includes the detail about Agamemnon vowing to sacrifice the most beautiful thing in Mycenae the year Iphigenia was born) and reveals it to the women. Achilles is handsome and heroic, offers to marry Iphigenia and kisses her, but she says: "No marriage . . . Only glory . . ." and he later appears with his men at the sacrifice offering to save her. She has been gagged, but now takes off the gag and says: "Father, don't grieve anymore . . . The ships can sail." Odysseus then comes to Clytemnestra to announce the substitution of the deer; Clytemnestra screams "I hope you all die in the war you've created for yourselves!".²⁸ Overall, *Age of Bronze* is a remarkable achievement, carefully researched, thoughtfully constructed, beautifully executed.

Sometimes adaptations range far from the original play. Well-known playwright and filmmaker Neil LaBute published *Bash: Three Plays* in 1999; one of these monologues is *Iphigenia in Orem*. Orem is a suburb of Salt Lake City, so the unnamed male speaker of this play is probably Mormon; a film made for TV in 2001 added the words "Latter-Day Plays" to the title, and writing these plays apparently caused LaBute to be expelled from the Mormon church. The speaker describes the death of his baby daughter, his role in it, and how he used it to benefit his career; it might be considered a confession, but he shows no remorse—chilling. A reviewer of the original New York production said "Evil wears an all-American glow . . . insistently brutal" yet "with an earnest, probing moralism as fierce as that of Nathaniel Hawthorne."²⁹ Australian author Tom Holloway produced *Love Me Tender* in 2010. This is an extremely open-ended script: how many characters are involved, who they are, how many actors perform, the place, the time, all are left unspecified. In the first scene, "Sorrow and Joy," the birth of a little girl who has fur and hooves is described. In the second, "Saviour/Sacrifice," one character states that this is the best time to bring a little girl into the world, because of the sense of equality, but gradually the discussion moves to dangers to girls who are so helpless, and then to agreement about how good they taste, "so tender and juicy." In another, the "Kids R Kool Dance Team" announce they're about to perform the Princess Dance. And so it goes, ending with three scenes called "Sacrifice." A reviewer of a 2013 production in Melbourne commented "This is theatre, but the events in the narratives are not actually performed on stage. Instead, performers tell their story, often in metaphor, mostly in direct address to the audience. The result is

28 Shanower (2004) 211.

29 Brantley (1999).

that what the audience encounters is not strictly speaking dramatic, but tends more towards the literary arts.”³⁰

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

Iphigenia at Aulis has been a most attractive subject for visual artists. Some of the earliest visual images of this play are found on a set of six terracotta bowls dating to the 2nd century BC which feature ten scenes from the play in bas-relief, along with extensive textual quotations. But the visual images themselves are limited in their accessibility and of interest primarily to scholars (though these bowls do not depict the sacrifice itself, which is strange).³¹ Far more interesting and influential is a superb fresco discovered in 1824 in the so-called House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii (Italy). This house contained numerous painted frescoes with Greek mythic and epic topics, and the one pertaining to *Iphigenia at Aulis* is assumed to be a copy or echo of a famous work by the Greek painter Timanthes of Sicyon (ca. 400 BC). The messenger speech in the final scene in Euripides’ play says when Agamemnon sees his daughter “walking into the grove/towards slaughter he groaned, and turning his head away/he shed tears, holding his cloak in front of his eyes (1548–50).”³² That this detail appears in the painting might argue for the authenticity of that scene, but not necessarily. Cicero describes the Greek painting thus: “Agamemnon’s head had to be covered, since that huge sorrow could not be depicted with a brush” (*Orator* 22.74). The figure in the Roman fresco to the left, with fillets in his hair and a knife in his right hand, is presumably Calchas. Agamemnon’s left foot is placed on what seems to be the stone altar of Artemis/Diana, as suggested by the bronze figure with two deer beside her. In the sky above is Artemis/Diana crowned and holding a bow, looking towards Iphigenia being carried towards her by a deer.

What is striking about these figures (and perhaps, though we will never know, about Timanthes’ original) is that the king is the only one who knows how to react to what is happening. Each of the others, including the two men carrying the girl, is worried, terribly uncertain, looking around for some kind of understanding or meaning. Like the text of the play with the final messenger speech included, this fresco has it both ways—the horror of the sacrifice and

³⁰ Chilver (2013).

³¹ See Michelakis (2006) 119–21, and especially Kovacs (2010) 181–96.

³² Gamel (2009) 386.

the salvific divine intervention—but the figures above are just as uncertain as those below. Iphigenia clutching the deer's horn looks back, worried, as if still fearful she might be caught, while Artemis/Diana seems surprised at the sight of the girl. Like the uncertainties in the play's script, these uncertainties make the fresco truly intriguing and thought-provoking.³³

In visual representations of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, just as in literary ones, there is a long lacuna. The first recorded painting is *Il sacrificio di Ifigenia* ("Sacrifice of Iphigenia") by the Italian painter Ferrando Ferramola (1478–1528), dated 1511. A 1555 painting by another Italian artist, Niccolo Giolfino (1477–1555), with the same title shows a figure more like Cupid than Diana descending from the sky.³⁴

The first painting to offer a vertical tableau is apparently Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet's *Le sacrifice d'Iphigénie* ("The sacrifice of Iphigenia," 1684), in which the surprised mortals, including a bearded Calchas and Achilles drawing his sword, lift their eyes to Diana above.³⁵ From the end of the 17th century begins an outpouring of paintings, including most importantly those of the Italian artist Giovanni Batista Tiepolo, who returned to the topic repeatedly between 1720 and 1757, often in cycles of frescoes.³⁶ These are often elaborately architectural compositions, juxtaposing the human figures with pillars and ceilings. Here there is no wonder or uncertainty; the arrival of the miracle seems utterly necessary and appropriate, fitting as it does perfectly into the overall scheme. Agamemnon, furthest to the right, is still veiled as in the Timanthes fresco.

Achilles often figures in these images, trying to save Iphigenia or mourning her loss—a much expanded role from the one he plays in Euripides' script, but one which fits with the post-Racine romantic reading of the events. In 1819 in *La colère d'Achille* or, *Sacrifice d'Iphigénie* ("The Anger of Achilles" or "The Sacrifice of Iphigenia"), the Neoclassic painter Jacques-Louis David, an influential French artist who often depicted classical subjects, offered a boldly different perspective, a close-up focusing on the emotions of Achilles, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Agamemnon—anger, grief, resignation, command.

While in the 19th century we also see portrayals (often mocking) of actors at work on this script, similar to the literary burlesques, in the 20th century artists experiment with different styles, such as the neoclassical sculpture *L'enlèvement d'Iphigénie* (1901) by the French artist Félix Souldès (1857–1942),³⁷

33 For further discussion of this provocative image, see Michelakis (2006) 91–2, 111–2; Kovacs (2010) 179–80, 214–9.

34 Reid (1993) I: 600.

35 Reid (1993) I: 600.

36 Reid (1993) I: 600–3.

37 Reid (1993) I: 604.

the abstract painting *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* (1942) by Mark Rothko, Russian-born, American ‘abstract Expressionist’ painter (1903–1970),³⁸ and *Iphigenia and Jephtha’s Daughter* (1980), a bronze relief by the American artist Leonard Baskin (1922–2000).³⁹

Music

Since in their original performances Greek dramas involved music and dance, opera is an especially appropriate form of reception. Following the publication of Racine’s version of the play a great number of operas began to be composed on the sacrifice theme. Between 1699 and 1811 about thirty-nine operas on this theme were composed;⁴⁰ a number of these are based on Racine rather than Euripides. Almost none of these operas are available on audio recordings, even though the composers include the well-known Italian composers Giuseppe Domenico Scarlatti and Luigi Cherubini. There is one important exception, however: Christoph Willibald Gluck’s version, first performed in Paris 1774. His *Iphigénie en Aulide* followed three “reform” operas in which he and his librettist rejected the “abuses” of *opera seria*⁴¹ (repetition, excessive ornamentation) in favor of simplicity, clarity, and dramatic power in plot, character, words and music,⁴² a program which *Iphigénie en Aulide* also follows. As in most versions of the story at this period, the Achilles-Iphigenia romance—indeed engagement—is central. In the first act Agamemnon, regretting his part in the planned sacrifice, tries to make Iphigenia and Clytemnestra return to Mycenae by telling them that Achilles has been unfaithful. When Iphigenia confronts her fiancé he convinces her that he loves only her. In the second act the secret is revealed and Achilles swears that he will do anything to stop the sacrifice. In the third act Iphigenia accepts her fate, tries unsuccessfully to calm Achilles, and bids her mother farewell. As the sacrifice is about to take place Achilles storms in with his warriors, but Artemis/Diana now intervenes and announces that the gods are pleased with Iphigenia’s noble self-sacrifice and she has withdrawn her demand for the sacrifice. Although this opera is not frequently staged, there are seven audio recordings and a 2013

38 Reid (1993) I: 604.

39 Reid (1993) I: 605.

40 Reid (1993) I: 605.

41 For a definition of *opera seria*, see below, p. 158 n. 32.

42 See Hayes/Brown/Loppert/Dean (1997) for an overview; Ewans (forthcoming) provides a detailed analysis.

DVD of a Nederlandse Opera production, which also includes Gluck's 1779 *Iphigénie en Tauride*.⁴³

In the 20th century there are sporadic compositions on the theme, including the incidental music for a production at the Greek Theater in Berkeley, in 1915 by the German-born American composer Walter Damrosch;⁴⁴ two operas for radio—the Italian Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Ifigenia* (1950), and the Romanian Modernist composer Pascal Bentoiu's *Jertfirea Iphigeniei* ("Sacrifice of Iphigenia", 1968); and a few others.

Dance

Before the advent of video, dance is arguably the most elusive of performance media. The 20th century American dancer Isadora Duncan choreographed a dance production of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, first performed in Berlin 1905, later in London.⁴⁵ But reviews which say more about "floral tributes" and financial success than about choreography and question "bare-legged dancing on a public stage" give little help.⁴⁶ Even less information is available about the choreography for Herbert Graf's production of Gluck's opera at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia 1935, by the famous modern dance pioneer Doris Humphrey and her partner Charles Weidman.⁴⁷ All the more reason to be grateful for contemporary recording techniques!

On Stage and Screen⁴⁸

Stage

The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama database lists only twelve productions of *Iphigenia at Aulis* during the 19th century, and none in the United States. It is therefore especially striking that of the first nine productions in the 20th century, five were staged at American colleges, some in Greek, some in translation. Two of these institutions were women's colleges, many of which were presenting Greek plays at this time. Smith College in Northampton (Massachusetts) produced *Iphigenia at Aulis* in Greek with

43 Gluck (2013).

44 On which, see Foley (2012) 54–6; also below, p. 29.

45 Reid (1993) 1: 604.

46 E.g., *New York Times* August 2, 1908 (<http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1908/08/02/106774688.html?pageNumber=13>).

47 Reid (1993) 1: 604.

48 In this section I focus on 20th- and 21st century productions, especially American ones.

original music and choral dance in 1912, and again ten years later. College and university productions have continued both in the United States and Britain fairly regularly to the present moment, although unfortunately discussions of American theatrical productions of Greek plays often include only professional productions.⁴⁹

A much higher-profile event was a 1915 production at the Hearst Greek Theatre at the University of California, Berkeley, an 8,900-seat structure modeled on the ancient theatre at Epidaurus, which opened in 1903. This was a professional, extraordinarily ambitious production—a triple bill including Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides' *Medea* as well as *Iphigenia at Aulis*; the latter was given two performances because of audience demand. The driving force of this production was Margaret Anglin, a remarkable actress/director/intellectual who carefully researched her productions,⁵⁰ revised scripts and music, oversaw every facet including publicity, and played the lead roles. Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony, composed orchestral music for *Iphigenia at Aulis* and the other two plays, with influences from Gluck and Wagner. Anglin also appeared in a professional production of *Iphigenia at Aulis* in 1921 in New York, directed by Maurice Browne.⁵¹

In 1951 Rexroth's *Beyond the Mountains*⁵² was staged in New York by the Living Theatre, an important experimental group directed by Julian Beck and featuring his partner Judith Malina. This "slow, ritualized, hieratic . . . frozen sleepwalk through the classical period . . . merely a collection of beautiful moments . . . with more concern for its form than with any potential emotional truth" attracted tiny audiences and generally negative reviews.⁵³

The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama database lists a notable number of Greek productions of *Iphigenia at Aulis* staged between 1956 and 1968, including three extended tours. This phenomenon seems clearly linked to highly unstable contemporary historical and political events of this period in Greece: a bitterly contested election in 1961, the assassination of a prominent politician in 1963, and a right-wing coup in 1967 which put in

49 Hartigan (1995) and Foley (2012), though very valuable, follow this model.

50 Foley (2012) 61 calls Anglin "the single most ambitious and successful American actress/director of Greek tragedy on the American stage." For a full discussion see Foley (2012) 47–61.

51 On this production see Hartigan (1995) 90–2.

52 On the script, see above, pp. 20–1.

53 Tytell (1995) 77–8; Foley (2012) 133.

place a military dictatorship lasting until 1974.⁵⁴ During this period there are no American productions of note, but that changed in November 1967, when Greek director Michael Cacoyannis' (1922–2011) staging of the play opened at Circle in the Square in New York to generally favorable reviews, and ran until May 1968.⁵⁵ Cacoyannis was surely inspired by political events in Greece, while his American audiences were probably thinking about the growing feminist movement and increasing criticisms of the Vietnam War. In 1977 Cacoyannis also wrote and directed the film *Iphigenia*,⁵⁶ which was unquestionably the major staging of *Iphigenia at Aulis* during the 1970s, although one or two theatrical productions of the play occurred annually in various locations during this and the following decade.

In the 1980s a new phenomenon appeared: productions involving several plays. In 1980 the Royal Shakespeare Company (Stratford-upon Avon/London) produced *The Greeks* by John Barton and Kenneth Cavander, a cycle of ten plays by all three Greek tragedians grouped as *The War*, *The Murders*, and *The Gods* performed over three days, with Euripides' two Iphigenia plays framing the whole. Barton directed; his desire was to "tackle a Greek play lightly" and create "a single new play," demonstrating how differently characters (including gods) behave in different plays, emphasizing "the decay of civilization," and trying "to tell the story from the women's point of view."⁵⁷ This drama, reduced to two evenings, was performed in 1981 at the Williamstown Theatre Festival (in Massachusetts) to good reviews,⁵⁸ in 1982 at the Huntington Theatre, Boston, and from time to time in various versions around the United States, most recently in Ohio (2014). Euripides' script is very condensed in this collection's *Iphigenia in Aulis*, although Agamemnon has a 130-line speech, and Artemis is far more emphasized than in Euripides.

This idea of combining several plays continued in the following decade; the motivation for these combinations seems to have been a desire to reframe the *Oresteia* from a feminist perspective.⁵⁹ As the play which provides background to Agamemnon's murder by Clytemnestra *Iphigenia at Aulis* has frequently been used in such combinations throughout the 1990s and beyond,

54 Bakogianni (2013a) 228–32; von Steen (2015) will undoubtedly be a major contribution to this area.

55 Hartigan (1995) 92–3; Foley (2012) 296. This production was revived in 1969 with a different director and cast.

56 See below, pp. 35–8.

57 Barton (1981) vii, x, xiii.

58 For example, see King (1981).

59 See Foley (2005) 316–9, and Hall (2013) 263–7.

including with *Iphigenia in Tauris* (*The Iphigenia Cycle*, Huntington Theatre, Boston 1991; Court Theater, Chicago 1997; also Poet's Theater, Seattle, 2003);⁶⁰ with Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Sophocles' *Electra* (*The Clytemnestra Project*, Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis 1992);⁶¹ with *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Electra* and *Iphigenia in Tauris* (*Agamemnon and his Daughters*, adapted by K. Cavander, Arena Stage, Washington, D.C. 2001);⁶² with nine other versions of Greek plays by John Barton (*Tantalus*, Denver, 2001);⁶³ and with all three plays of the *Oresteia* (*Furious Blood* by Kelly Stuart, Sledgehammer Theatre, San Diego, 2000).⁶⁴

The best-known of such productions was the spectacularly successful *Les Atrides*, in which Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* preceded Aeschylus' three *Oresteia* plays, directed by Ariane Mnouchkine with the Théâtre du Soleil (Paris) in a combination of theatrical styles from very different traditions including Japanese Noh and Indian Kathakali. Between 1990 and 1993 this production offered each play separately and finally the tetralogy, touring throughout Europe and to Canada and the United States. Yet it is very elusive, attested only by reports from spectators and still photos; the script, music, and video records are unavailable.⁶⁵ Greek drama staged by artists using very different theatrical traditions can be powerful and effective, as the work of Yukio Ninagawa and Tadashi Suzuki demonstrates,⁶⁶ but without more concrete evidence it is hard to evaluate how and with what effect a French practitioner used these traditions in *Les Atrides*.

Among University productions it is worth mentioning a staging of *Iphigenia at Aulis* provoked by the 1991 U.S. invasion of Iraq which took place at my university in Santa Cruz, California, using Don Taylor's translation. Director Paul Graf, an undergraduate, chose as the setting a meadow with higher ground on each side; the audience sat on one side, while just over the hill on the other military standards signified the army. The only set was Agamemnon's large tent, borrowed from the National Guard. As in the ancient theatre, there were only two ways in and out: over the hill to and from the troops, and down or up the meadow on the audience's right, the road to Mycenae. The costumes were contemporary—Agamemnon and Achilles wore Army uniforms, Menelaus a

60 Hartigan (1995) 94–5; Foley (2012) 298–9.

61 Hartigan (1995) 76–9.

62 Foley (2012) 299.

63 Reviewed by Foley (2001).

64 On this production see Foley (2005) 319–22.

65 For a thoughtful discussion see Kovacs (2010) 250–3 (with bibliography).

66 On these directors, see, e.g., below, pp. 78–80; 225; 248; 418–20; 529–30.

suit, Clytemnestra a formal dress, hat and gloves, while Iphigenia was a playful teenager in pedal-pushers. A comic actor was cast as Achilles; as he gave his self-absorbed speech to Clytemnestra (*Iphigenia at Aulis* 919–74) he roamed through the audience and flirted with the women in the Chorus. Even as she flattered him Clytemnestra understood exactly how worthless was his offer of help. The boldest choice came after Iphigenia, accompanied by the Chorus, went over the hill to her death; her mother, now disheveled, vented her anguish and rage on a bridal canopy that the Chorus had set up, then collapsed on the ground. Suddenly the Chorus came running back, with Agamemnon watching them from the hilltop. As they told Clytemnestra the story Agamemnon had taught them about the divine salvation, they acted out the roles, complete with a toy deer as a prop. When Agamemnon delivered his final lines to Clytemnestra he tried to kiss her goodbye; she brusquely stopped him, and he and the Chorus ran back over the hill shouting “Troy! Troy!” The Old Man now emerged from the tent carrying the baby Orestes and he and Clytemnestra started on their journey back to Mycenae, to wait for Agamemnon’s return.

An interesting idea struck me when Agamemnon, responding to Menelaus’ amazed questions “No! Why? Your own child? What compels you to do it?” said “This whole Greek army, in camp all round us!”⁶⁷ and swung his arm around in a circle. Of course, there was no one camped there—except the audience. I wonder if, during the original production, the Athenian audience might have reflected on the role they had played in the suffering and deaths of young people in the Peloponnesian War.

Among the most interesting adaptations of *Iphigenia at Aulis* for the stage that have appeared in the last decades of the 20th and 21st centuries, several are by Irish authors—Marina Carr, Colin Teevan, and Edna Walsh.⁶⁸ There are also three bold American ones: the *Iphigenia(s)* by Ellen McLaughlin (1995), Caridad Svich (2005), and Charles Mee (2007). The well-known playwright and actress Ellen McLaughlin has adapted a number of Greek scripts. She describes her process: “I read every English translation I can lay my hands on extremely carefully and then put them all away and start to write. . . . I have taken liberties with every play, some more than others, but have remained fairly faithful to the fundamental dramatic structure.”⁶⁹ This process started in 1992 when she wrote a version of Sophocles’ *Electra*, which then became part of *Iphigenia and Other Daughters* (1995). A focus on speech and the utter absence of any

67 Taylor (1990) 26.

68 Hall (2005) 14–19 discusses these plays.

69 McLaughlin (2005) xiv.

reference to action (which gives great leeway to directors and actors) characterize this script. McLaughlin gives only the first six pages to *Iphigenia at Aulis*, with monologues by Iphigenia and Clytemnestra. For those who know the original scripts this approach can be deeply exciting, but can those who do not understand? An early review called this a “self-conscious meditation of a play” in which “the playwright overworks her polemical alphabet to spell things out. Half the joy of theatre is inference. *Iphigenia and Other Daughters* does most of the thinking for you.”⁷⁰

Iphigenia Crash Lands Falls on the Neon Shell That Was Her Heart (A Rave Fable), (2005) by Caridad Svich, American playwright, editor and translator, is described by the author as “a trance tale . . . an ‘ambient translation’ ” performed by five actors playing various roles; Iphigenia’s father Adolfo, for example, also plays Virtual MC, General’s Ass, Soldier x, Chorus, and Fresa Girl 1 (*fresa* [‘strawberry’] here refers to “the ghosts of girls killed by the hundreds in border towns along the Americas”).⁷¹ There is Spanish slang, extensive use of music and video, cross-dressing and transexuality, references to Chalkis and Pylos juxtaposed with contemporary events, a surrealistic ‘satyr play’ interlude, and much, much more. A sample of Iphigenia’s dialogue:⁷²

The whole earth has been irradiated, and I’m flying through the air looking down on my house, except it’s not there anymore. There’s nothing, except land and a few flowers made of human bones where my room used to be. And my baby brother is swimming in this large pool shaped like a guitar, like the one Elvis used to have. And he’s happy. He’s not drowning in coca anymore. He’s free. And I’m on the gulf where the sea is gray and no one wants a piece of me, not the newspapers, not the boys in fatigues, not even my father . . .

This is a fascinating script, but how does it work in performance? One reviewer of a Chicago production thought it “a transfixing vision of hell on earth, buttressed by Svich’s fractured poetic voice and her unblinking laser gaze at the ethical costs of cheap labor and disposable celebrity. . . . Svich cunningly twists our expectations of class and gender roles . . . Not all of Svich’s heightened language lands, but the crash is sobering.”⁷³ Another, however, found it “melodramatic . . . as disjointed as its title . . . Even though Svich’s scenes pull from a huge

70 Brantley (1995).

71 Svich (2005) 331–2.

72 Svich (2005) 366.

73 Hill (2011).

wardrobe of influences, she relies heavily on Euripides' sense of tragedy" but the production was unable to "reach the epic highs needed for Greek drama."⁷⁴

Another adaptation which has aroused conflicting responses is Charles L. Mee's *Iphigenia 2.0*⁷⁵ (2007). Mee, who has done a number of adaptations of Greek drama, says "There is no such thing as an original play. None of the classical Greek plays were original: they were all based on earlier plays or poems or myths. . . . The plays on this website were mostly composed in the way that Max Ernst made his Fatagaga pieces toward the end of World War I: texts have often been taken from, or inspired by, other texts. Among the sources for these pieces are the classical plays of Euripides as well as texts from the contemporary world. . . . I like plays that are not too neat, too finished, too presentable. My plays are broken, jagged, filled with sharp edges, filled with things that take sudden turns, careen into each other, smash up, veer off in sickening turns. . . . And then I like to put this—with some sense of struggle remaining—into a classical form, a Greek form, or a beautiful dance theatre piece, or some other effort at civilization."⁷⁶

Some of Mee's adaptations are powerful and effective, especially *Orestes 2.0*. But *Iphigenia 2.0* is not at the level of his best work. In the first scene, for example, Agamemnon pontificates for a long time about "the histories of empires" which are sometimes "brought to ruin/by no more than the belief/that something must be done/ when in truth/doing nothing would have been the better course." The empire is, of course, the United States and its mistaken actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, conflicts which have inspired many U.S. productions of *Iphigenia at Aulis* since 1991. But this reference is blatant rather than allusive, leaving little to the audience's imagination; later there are allusions to "a terrorist camp," "a big bazaar," and so forth. Worse, important decisions are regularly made offstage and announced onstage, greatly lowering the dramatic stakes. One of the soldiers listening to Agamemnon says: "The soldiers have already said/they will not sail to Troy . . . unless you make a sacrifice that means as much to you/ as their lives mean to them." Achilles already knows about the "wedding party on its way" and pompously lectures Agamemnon about his "autonomy." Iphigenia is a ditzzy teenager "in the coolest, latest American teenage fashion" with two bridesmaids excited about the "bachelorette" parties to come. Clytemnestra learns offstage about the planned sacrifice and confronts Agamemnon, threatening to kill him; he makes no reply. The language is often

74 Zacher (2011).

75 Mee appends numbers to indicate that these are adaptations, not translations, and changes the numbers when he modifies the scripts.

76 Mee, the (re)making project, available at <http://www.charlesmee.org>.

banal: Clytemnestra lectures the bridesmaids about their responsibilities: “Get with the program . . . Stay until the reception hall manager kicks you out.” When Iphigenia learns Agamemnon intends to kill her she immediately agrees; when Clytemnestra protests she insists:

What would you have me do, mother?/ Stay at home and make a decision/ about the draperies in the bedroom? . . . I don't want to be a useless/ pointless human being/ when I have a chance to have had a life/ that will be remembered forever/ as an example/ to everyone who lives after me/ immortal.

Agamemnon protests, Iphigenia insists until he says “OK then” and follows her offstage. There has been music at times throughout the show; now music begins again, and Achilles, other soldiers, and the bridesmaids dance, until Achilles “throws a bottle of pink champagne against the wall” and “the world descends into a big party riot murder war/ the home and war fronts combined/ dancing and embracing and weeping/ and throwing and breaking things” until Agamemnon returns carrying the dead Iphigenia, both of them covered in blood.

Mee's version has been staged in Los Angeles and New York 2007, Chicago 2012, to hugely mixed reviews. I agree with the Chicago reviewer who describes “flattened characterizations and manipulative dialogue,” “uniformly detestable” characters, a script written with “authorial contempt and breathtaking condescension” and tragedy “nowhere to be found.”⁷⁷

Screen

Cacoyannis had a prolific career in screenwriting and directing stage, opera, and film, including a number of works based on Greek drama.⁷⁸ As mentioned above, in 1977 he wrote and directed the film *Iphigenia*, in which he used Greek actors (including Irene Papas, who had played Clytemnestra in his New York production) speaking modern Greek. It has been argued convincingly that this film “mirrors the real-life-tragedy of [Cacoyannis'] home island,”⁷⁹ Cyprus, which had been invaded and partitioned. It is certainly the single most well-known example of the reception of this play.

⁷⁷ Oleksinski (2012). Hartigan (2011) takes much more positive view.

⁷⁸ In 1962 he wrote and directed *Electra* based on Euripides (in Greek: see below, pp. 227–9), and in 1971 *Trojan Women* (in English: see below, pp. 89–92).

⁷⁹ Bakogianni (2013b) 217.

At the beginning of this chapter I argued that the very openness and uncertainty of Euripides' script—its shifts and reversals of plot, character and tone, the questions it raises—offer great opportunities to later artists. In particular, Euripides made a crucial decision to bring only certain characters onstage—Agamemnon, Menelaus, Achilles, but not Calchas or Odysseus. Also, he might have cast the Chorus as soldiers; instead it consists of women from nearby Chalkis, essentially naïve tourists excited by the presence of the army, who respond to the events they witness with growing unease. Agamemnon, Menelaus, Achilles, and others refer to the offstage characters and the unseen army to justify the stances and actions they are taking. Under these circumstances the audience might well constantly ask whether those statements about what is happening just beyond the parameters of the stage are valid.

Cacoyannis eliminates the uncertainties: he begins by lengthily depicting the very large army gathered at Aulis under a blazing sun—bored, restless, eager to get to war. As Agamemnon and Menelaus ride by they shout “When?” and fight over inadequate food. The scene then shifts to a peaceful grove where short-haired men in long white gowns tend sheep, goats, and calves; this turns out to be the precinct of Artemis. In order to get meat for his men Agamemnon leads a hunting party into the grove and many animals are killed, including a sacred stag identified by its gilded horns. A dark-eyed, dark-bearded man later identified as Calchas stares angrily at the dying animal and the king who killed it. That evening the chiefs, as restless as the men, including Odysseus (depicted as a demagogue trying to get the soldiers' support) gather in Agamemnon's hut, where the king declares that because of the lack of wind the army must be disbanded. Calchas now arrives and delivers a prophecy: if a sacrifice is given to the gods, the winds will blow. This news makes the chiefs rejoice and the news passes quickly to the men. But Calchas now reveals the identity of the victim required. Agamemnon shouts “No!” but when the soldiers return says nothing, which they take as approval and roar their support. The scene now shifts to Argos (filmed at the ruins of Mycenae), where Clytemnestra shows Iphigenia the letter Agamemnon has sent announcing Achilles' desire to marry her. Mother and daughter seem pleased and set out for Aulis. Only now, some thirty-five minutes into the film, does the first scene of Euripides' play take place.

These directorial decisions are clear: they show that the army is a dangerous force, hard to control, that Agamemnon is an indecisive leader, that Calchas' prophecy is motivated by anger at the king, that Odysseus is working for his own advantage. But these clear distinctions—between power and weakness, greed and innocence, male and female—leave no room for doubt about the eventual outcome. And so it goes: moments of strangeness and provocation to thought

in Euripides' script are diminished or eliminated. Agamemnon says "Fate rules, not I," calls the army "a thousand-headed monster," insists that if he resists the army will kill not only their family but the whole city of Argos, and delivers his jingoistic rhetoric with conviction. The only character who undergoes change is Clytemnestra; Agamemnon's pained uncertainty, Iphigenia's innocence and vulnerability continue. She states that her death is inevitable but that she can choose how to die, and that dying willingly will be her victory. Throughout the film the musical score (by the wonderful composer Mikis Theodorakis) underlines the strong military themes with drums and low chords, combatting and defeating the gentle lyric melody associated with women.

Especially striking is Cacoyannis' change of Euripides' pompous, narcissistic, sophistic Achilles into a handsome young hero who genuinely cares for Iphigenia and risks his life to defend her.⁸⁰ The desire to save Achilles is another reason for her to accept being sacrificed; "Will I let him die fighting a whole army? I want him to live." This moment is underscored by combining the lyric melody with percussion. Her statements "We should be grateful that we're Greeks, not barbarians or slaves" and to Achilles "Don't get killed" are delivered without a hint of irony. Wouldn't the best way to avoid killing young Greek (and Trojan) men be to cancel this war?

Earlier Calchas pointed out to Odysseus that the wind was rising; as Iphigenia walks up the hill towards the altar, it starts to blow fiercely. The men dash towards the ships, Agamemnon runs after his daughter, but Calchas grabs her and they disappear into smoke (from the sacrificial fire?); Agamemnon now stops, looking horrified at what he sees. The film ends as Clytemnestra stares with hatred at the ships sailing out of the harbor, the wind coiling her black hair in front of her face. She is turning into a Fury who will get her revenge.

This is a powerful film, with some strong performances (especially that of Papas). But its definition of tragedy is simplistic: "mistakes are made," but there is no blame, no suggestion of alternatives, arousal of feeling rather than thought. It has been observed that "inconsistency and ambiguity seem to be eliminated,"⁸¹ and as a "melodrama" which "depoliticizes the narrative" it "offers a 'solution' that amounts to an identification with victimhood and to personal and affective responses" as "the play's open-ended dramatic narrative of generic, hermeneutic and authorial uncertainty is replaced by the

80 MacKinnon (1986) 90.

81 MacKinnon (1986) 88.

certainties of a crime melodrama.”⁸² This is very far from Euripides’ disruptive and disturbing vision.

Another important film of *Iphigenia at Aulis* was produced by BBC Television in 1990, directed by Don Taylor using his own translation.⁸³ Like Cacoyannis Taylor brings members of the Greek army onto the stage but Euripides’ female Chorus is also there, responding (though not in song) to the events as they happen. The bare set with a variety of levels works well, rather Victorian costumes balance between ancient and modern, and music is used effectively for transitions and climaxes. The reversals of Euripides’ script are all there, as well as Agamemnon’s cowardice, Achilles’ pomposity, and above all the brilliant British actress Fiona Shaw as Clytemnestra, who embodies every aspect of that role from dignity to desperation. The young actress Imogen Boorman as Iphigenia makes a fine transition from innocence to chauvinistic rage as she urges the soldiers to “Sacrifice me./And then to Troy, plunder the whole city,/When you leave it, leave a ruin!”⁸⁴ Now black-clad priestesses with creepy eye makeup take charge of her, strip off her dress, crown her, slather her neck in preparation for the killing stroke, and to threatening music lead her offstage.⁸⁵ The sacrifice happens offstage but the faces of the soldiers watching eagerly are shown, as is Clytemnestra’s face as she screams. Unlike Cacoyannis Taylor keeps the messenger speech, and there is no hint that he is lying; the Chorus believe him, but Clytemnestra says “Isn’t it a lie, concocted for my benefit,/To soothe me and keep me quiet?” Now a fierce wind begins to blow, scattering debris around as everyone else runs offstage; Clytemnestra gathers her cloak around her and walks away; the last shot, as in Cacoyannis’ film, is her bitter face.

To date there has been insufficient attention to the reception of Greek drama in Latin and South America. Happily, this is now starting to change, and one powerful example is the 2007 film *Extranjera* by Argentinian director Inés de Oliveira C  zar. This is a bold and thoughtful adaptation of *Iphigenia at Aulis* in which a *curandero* (healer) in a remote village afflicted with drought and disease decides to sacrifice his daughter in order to maintain his position and power. The film is not readily available, but a fine article discusses the film thoroughly,

82 Michelakis (2013) 144, 148. Michelakis is wrong to dismiss McDonald (1983) and MacKinnon (1986) as “pioneering but now outdated” (p. 4); his work is more theoretically nuanced, but their discussions are full of thought.

83 This film is not readily available in the U.S.; I am most grateful to the author/director for giving me a copy. Taylor had already directed *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone* in his own translations for television in 1988.

84 Taylor (1990) 63.

85 See Wrigley (2012) for an excellent discussion of the film, with photos.

arguing that the director sought “to expose the inconsistencies and incongruities of patriarchy and interrogate the hierarchical structures of rural Argentine society, which perpetuate female dependency and oppression.”⁸⁶

There is much, much more to be said on this topic, but not nearly enough space to do so. I close with the observation that just as literary responses to *Iphigenia at Aulis* are increasing, so are theatrical productions and films. The Court Theatre in Chicago staged Rudall’s translation in November–December 2014 to very positive reviews: Euripides’ attempt “to put his audience in the shoes of these characters still can—and still should—feel intensely present-tense and immediate.”⁸⁷ The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama database includes fifty-six productions between 1990 and 2000 and the exact same number between 2000 and 2010. Of course, this increase may well result from the greatly expanded accessibility to information in the digital age. But at a time when more productions of Greek drama are taking place than at any time in history it seems very likely that this provocative play will continue to attract theatre and film artists and audiences.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis*

An essential resource is Reid (1993): on *Iphigenia at Aulis* see vol. 1, 599–605. On the vexed question of the text and possible alterations, see Page (1934), Knox (1979), Kovacs (2003), and Gurd (2005); the last considers the script from a variety of theoretical perspectives.

Important literary and cultural analyses include Hamburger (1969), Vellacott (1975) esp. 42–9, 112–3, 130–2, 173–7, 201–4 (and *passim*)—a probing discussion of irony in various plays by Euripides, Foley (1985) and O’Connor-Visser (1987), both of which discuss *Iphigenia at Aulis* in light of Euripides’ other plays involving human sacrifice; Luschig (1988); and Rabinowitz (1993) 38–55, 103–5, 107.

Two important surveys of the general reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis* are Michelakis (2006) esp. 140–9, 190–3 (and *passim*), and especially Kovacs (2010), a Ph.D. dissertation which will soon appear as a book.

The most important resource for scholarship on the performance reception of ancient Greek drama overall is the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/. The Productions Database is easily accessible online, and in Oxford there is a treasure trove of materials from

86 Nikoloutsos (2010) 93.

87 Jones (2014).

productions. Studies of particular performance traditions which include productions of *Iphigenia at Aulis* include Hartigan (1995), Hall/Macintosh (2005), and Foley (2012). Resources on specific performance receptions of *Iphigenia at Aulis* are Hall (2005) and (2013). Important discussions of film receptions are McDonald (1983) 121–91, Mackinnon (1986) 85–94, Bakogianni (2013a, 2013b), and Michelakis (2013).

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Trojan Women

Rosanna Lauriola

“Are you crying, my child? . . . Why are you clutching me with your hands, and clinging to my robe, like a nestling seeking shelter beneath my wings?” (Trojan Women 749–51).¹ A child, tender and defenseless like a baby bird, is dragged away from his helpless mother, while hopelessly grasping her dress, which can no longer give him the comfort of motherly protection. The iron law of war cannot grant him the right to live even as a war prisoner. It is a matter of survival and national security, as strategically the leaders of the winning side would, and do, say. And the mother has just to bear the pain, to keep quiet lest she leave the child indignantly unburied (Trojan Women 727–38). Astyanax and Andromache are the hopeless child and helpless mother of any wartime ever since Euripides penned Trojan Women in 415 BC, in the midst of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC). And the Trojan women are all the widows, the mothers, the brides-to be, the sisters, and the daughters who come to bear the heavy burden of the war and its aftermath—above all, but not exclusively, if they belong to the defeated side.

Being undoubtedly a play about the horrors and the atrocious effects of war, which are denounced through the vivid picture of the suffering of innocent victims, this Euripidean tragedy, perhaps more than any other, raises fundamental questions about the morality of war, if there is any, and about the capacity of men to take events under control fairly before they spiral out of control. It is, in fact, not simply a tragedy about the horrors of war, for it struggles with, and challenges, the crucial question of human responsibility. Poseidon and Athena blame the Greeks for sacrilege and, in consequence, for their own misfortunes; Hecuba blames the gods and Helen for the fall of her city and, in consequence, her and her family's misfortunes; Menelaus blames Helen, and Helen blames Aphrodite and Hecuba. . . . Human responsibility certainly lies at the core of any human event, last, but not least, of war and its management. It is an unavoidable matter with which all, conquerors and conquered, ultimately come to deal, although

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1 All translations, from any language into English, are mine, unless differently indicated in the footnotes.

both, in a way, are victims. Euripides' *Trojan Women* provides a forum to debate this complex matter as far as war and its effects are concerned. The responsibility of governments, of communities, and of individuals is certainly important in past and present wars, along with the suffering and the cruel fate of all victims. With war being the tragedy of society, this play has been used, over and over, as a weapon of protest against the waging of war on account of the diversified counterparts of the Trojan War that one can identify in any war-context of any time. The setting has in fact been differently interpreted as a concentration camp, a prison cell, or a camp for refugees. Likewise, the main characters have come to mirror the timeless maladies of war: Hecuba and the women of the chorus could symbolize a nation suffering from the impact of war; Helen, the purposelessness of war, or a scapegoat for the community's sufferings; Astyanax, any innocent, young victim of warmongers, and so forth.

It is unfortunately, over and over, an 'actual' tragedy. The pain of military conflicts never ends.

In Literature

Οὐκέτι Τροία ("Troy is no more," *Trojan Women* 99) says a resigned Hecuba to whom nothing else is left but tears: her country, her children, her husband, all are gone. With those words, Hecuba, a central figure of Euripides' *Trojan Women*, makes her debut on the stage, setting the scenario: Troy has fallen. If the town itself still partially stands, since the Greeks have not yet put it to the torch, its people are gone. Men and warriors are all dead; women and children have been taken as captives and will be enslaved. Troy is indeed no more.

Set in the immediate aftermath of the defeat, and portraying the fate of the surviving defeated, this tragedy seals the end of the "myth for all times," i.e., the story of the Trojan War.² At the same time, it offers a powerful document of the

2 Easterling (1997) 173. As is well known, Homer only alludes to, but does not cover, the last events of the Trojan story, which are among those that constitute the thematic ground of Euripides' *Trojan Women*. The Cyclic Epics of the 8th and 7th centuries BC are the earliest known sources of the 'after-*Iliad*' events. In particular, mention should be made of Arctinus' *Iliou Persis* (= "The sack of Troy") and Lesches' *Mikra Ilias* (= "The little *Iliad*"), which dealt with the burning of the city, the death of Astyanax and Polyxena, and the allotment of Andromache to Pyrrhus: see, e.g., Bowra (1961) 102; Boyle (1994) 17. For a comprehensive commentary on the 'lost Epics', including Arctinus' and Lesches' poems, see West (2013). In the 6th century BC the lyric poet Stesichorus, too, composed an *Iliou Persis*: likely based on the epic of Arctinus, it presents some innovations above all in terms of mitigating the emotions and tempering some of the most violent episodes, such as the death of Astyanax:

cruelty, folly, and futility of war,³ to the point that it becomes *the* anti-war play *par excellence*, an iconic play about all wars, and not a specific one.⁴ After a prologue which features two gods, Poseidon and Athena, introduces the issue of responsibility and foreshadows a sinister fate for the victors as well, the tragedy unfolds through a series of tableaux that reveal, in the midst of relentless lamentations, the lot apportioned to the conquered women of royal status, namely Hecuba, Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen.⁵ The women are waiting to know who their master will be. The news is brought by the Greek herald Talthybius, who, upon Hecuba's request, starts by announcing Cassandra's lot. She has been chosen by Agamemnon to be his "secret bride" (*Trojan Women* 252), a lot that Cassandra embraces with euphoric joy, for she is aware that her 'marriage' with Agamemnon will destroy his house.⁶ By that marriage she will thus avenge her own family, her people, and her country (e.g., ll. 356–60, 404–5, 460–1).

After vaguely answering Hecuba's inquiry about her youngest daughter, Polyxena (ll. 259–64),⁷ Talthybius, still upon Hecuba's request, turns his attention to Andromache, the widow of the best of the Trojans. Ironically she is assigned to the son of the best of the Achaeans who killed her husband. Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, will be her master. "I shall live as a slave in the house of murderers" (l. 660),⁸ says Andromache in despair. For her,

see Bowra (1961) 103–4. Stesichorus' composition constituted the source of a 1st-century AD marble relief (see below, pp. 69–70 and nn. 101–102).

3 With reference to this, according to Oates and O'Neill (1938) 958, "European literature can boast a no more potent document [...] than *The Trojan Women*."

4 Clay (2010) 233.

5 In the first generic reference to the distribution by lot of the Trojan women (ll. 31–2), made by Poseidon in the prologue, Helen is significantly singled out as being νομισθεῖσ' αἰχμάλωτος ἐνδίκως ("properly counted as prisoner," l. 35).

6 Unlike the version given by Aeschylus in his *Oresteia*, here in Euripides it is Cassandra's marriage to Agamemnon, rather than the sacrifice of Iphigenia, which will cause first Agamemnon's murder by Clytemnestra, and subsequently Clytemnestra's murder by Orestes, thus sealing the demise of Agamemnon's house: see Goff (2009) 50–1.

7 Polyxena has already been sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles (see Euripides, *Hecuba* 177–443). In *Trojan Women* for a while Hecuba remains unaware of her youngest daughter's fate, whereas the audience has been informed about it in the prologue (ll. 39–40). Ambiguous language is a peculiar trait of Talthybius' communication style, above all when it comes to reporting bad news (see, also, ll. 714–5). To Hecuba's question he indeed answers that the girl has been appointed to minister at Achilles' grave (l. 264). Only later, thanks to Andromache's rough and yet clarifying intervention Hecuba understands Talthybius' words (ll. 622–3).

8 By "murderers" Andromache is referring both to the father (Achilles) and the son (Neoptolemus), with the first being the murderer of her own husband, Hector, and the

death is preferable to the prospective of a life of distress (l. 637).⁹ She cannot even find consolation, if not hope, in her child, Astyanax: he is “unjustly stripped off from” his mother (ll. 791–2). An evil greater than the marriage with Neoptolemus is, in fact, soon announced to Andromache: a son of such a brave father should not be allowed to grow to manhood. This Odysseus has successfully suggested to the Greek Assembly (ll. 721–3), a shameful decision, as Talthybius admits (l. 788); a *barbaric* evil to which the *civilized* Greeks gratuitously indulge, as Andromache angrily cries (ll. 764–5). It is then the turn of Helen: Menelaus in person enters to announce her lot. It is Menelaus’ decision to kill the woman once back in Argos, as retribution for all the Greeks who died in Troy because of her (ll. 875–9). Differently from the other women, Helen does not passively yield to her apportioned lot; on the contrary, she voices the injustice of which she feels herself a victim (ll. 902–3). Upon Hecuba’s invitation to let Helen speak against Menelaus’ verdict, Helen engages in a debate with the fallen queen of Troy to demonstrate that there is no reason to blame her for the war and its consequences. First, it was Hecuba who, giving birth to Paris, set the beginning of all troubles (ll. 919–20); next, it was Priam who ruined Troy and Helen herself by failing to slay the infant (ll. 921–2);¹⁰ finally, it was Aphrodite, a “no small goddess”, who accompanied Paris to Menelaus’

second the murderer of her father-in-law, Priam. The latter murder is hinted at by Poseidon (ll. 16–7) and Hecuba (ll. 481–3).

- 9 Goff (2009) 53–4, 57–8, 63–6, observes that all three royal women, Cassandra, Andromache, and Helen, face and challenge Hecuba with arguments that at first seem paradoxical. Cassandra argues that, after all, the Trojans were more fortunate than the Greeks and gained real glory, while the Greeks have to go away with shame (ll. 364–77); Andromache argues that Polyxena has been blessed by her fate and she is happier dead than alive, for death is better than a life in sorrow (ll. 635–42; also, cf. l. 606); and Helen outrageously exculpates herself by arguing that Priam and Hecuba were to blame for provoking the war (ll. 914–22). Each demonstrates her own paradox in a way that borders on sophistry: see, also, Goldhill (1997) 145–50 (especially with reference to Helen); Clay (2010) 246. The inversion of the significance of victory and defeat, which is the core of the argument of Cassandra, has also played an important role in the ‘Melos interpretation’: Goff (2009) 53–4. On the ‘Melos interpretation’, see below, pp. 48–9.
- 10 There is here an allusion to the story of Hecuba’s dream: when pregnant of Paris she had a dream in which she gave birth to a torch, a clear foreshadowing of Paris’ role in the fall of Troy by fire. Upon the prophets’ suggestion, once born the infant should have been exposed and thus killed; but the servant put in charge of this unpleasant mission had pity for him, and Paris survived (cf. Apollodorus, *Library* 3.12.5; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 91). In the passage of the tragedy mentioned above, Helen implies some culpability of Hecuba for the pregnancy and of Priam for not assuring the death of Paris. About Hecuba’s responsibility, see also below, n. 21.

house (ll. 925–42). Despite the sophistry of this speech,¹¹ the counter-argument of Hecuba seems to prevail; Menelaus agrees with her (l. 1036). Deaf to Helen's supplication, Menelaus restates his decision: Helen will be punished with death. Having started again the lamentations over the fallen Troy and its women's fate, Hecuba seals those lamentations with the mourning over Astyanax. Talthybius gives her the corpse of the little boy to be mourned and buried, as requested by Andromache: her master has already set sail, and his haste has prevented Andromache from burying the child herself (ll. 1125–45). Hecuba is then invited to 'surrender' to the men sent by Odysseus as she will be his slave (ll. 276–7; 1270–1). She herself and the women of the chorus are finally dragged away to the ships, while the Greek warriors make sure to reduce the town to ashes. "Enduring Troy exists no more" (l. 1324). Indeed, it is definitely wiped out: all the women have been separated and taken to exile and slavery; the last male, the hope of a future 'resurrection' of Troy, has been killed; the citadel has been burnt to ground. The plain of Troy is finally empty, as is the stage.

The vivid picture of the sufferings of the women of Troy as one of the consequences of a war that is finally over, the several references to the violence perpetrated by the enemy (rape,¹² immolation and infanticide,¹³ captivity, and other gratuitous, uncompassionate murders of defenseless civilians¹⁴), such a violence that today would either go under the label 'war crimes' or be seen as a violation of the so-called 'human rights', the action itself of burning an entire city to ground, all call for describing *Trojan Women* as an anti-war play. True to the essential significance of the ancient theatre and, particularly, of tragedy, it is safe to think that Euripides is inviting his audience to feel compassion for those women and to reflect both on the harsh consequences of the war and on its iron law, which, in turn, should instill some kind of repulsion toward war itself. Yet considering *Trojan Women* an anti-war manifesto risks distorting and oversimplifying it, seeing it through the lens of modern pacifism.¹⁵ The date of this play's production, the City Dionysia festivals in spring 415 BC, has

11 On a possible dependency of Helen's speech on *Encomium of Helen* by the 5th-century BC Sophist and rhetorician Gorgias, see Clay (2010) 171 with nn. 90, 92; 242.

12 As far as rape is concerned, there is an explicit reference to Cassandra's violation by Ajax, son of Oileus, at Athena's altar, at ll. 69–70.

13 With Polyxena and Astyanax being the main victims.

14 It would be enough to think of the old Priam, whom not even the status of a suppliant could save.

15 See Goff (2009) 32 with nn. 56–58. The anti-war interpretation has been not unanimously accepted on the ground that pacifism is a modern notion, and war was differently conceived by the Ancients. For a detailed discussion of this topic, see Green (1999).

suggested to scholars a connection with a specific historical event that took place on the island of Melos a few months before, as reported by Thucydides (5th century BC) in his history of the Peloponnesian War (5. 84–116). Melos, which had been neutral up to that time, refused Athens' request to enter the war. In response, the Athenians besieged the island, forcing it to surrender. When Melos surrendered, the Athenians enslaved and sold all the women and children, and put to death the male population. Such an event might have had some bearing on Euripides' representation of the Trojans' predicament at the hands of the Greeks.¹⁶ The prospect of disaster for the conquerors, too, which surfaces in the words of Poseidon and Athena in the prologue (ll. 65–97), has also suggested to some scholars a connection with another quasi-contemporary episode of the Peloponnesian War, i.e., the expedition to Sicily, which Athens was shortly about to launch without a compelling cause.¹⁷ Since the attack was unprovoked, the possible reference to it would convey a protest against the imperialistic aims of the Athenians, while the sinister prospect of disaster would be a sinister anticipation of the effects of that unprovoked invasion.¹⁸

Such connections are compelling, and they certainly make it hard to exclude the idea that this play was produced as part of a response to the ongoing Peloponnesian War. Yet thinking that Euripides wrote it to advocate a particular political policy is, once again, reductive.¹⁹ Through the prism of

16 See, e.g., Barlow (1986) 26–7. Scholars refer to this as 'the Melos interpretation', which is a controversial object of debate. For a synthesis of the positions, see Sidwell (2001), Burian-Shapiro (2009) 4–6; Goff (2009) 27–35.

17 See, e.g., Croally (1994) 232–4; Dué (2006) 147–50. For a summary of the references to the socio-historical climate that might appear as an anachronism, including references to Sicily, see Clay (2010) 236–8.

18 Sommerstein (1997) 72 argues that this tragedy "has often been seen as an attack on the aggressive, expansionist spirit that was soon to launch the Sicilian expedition". See also Mitchell-Boyask (2010) xxi.

19 Among those who support the idea that Euripides was indeed advocating for a specific political position, namely an anti-imperialistic one, Brillet-Dubois (2009) originally proposes that in *Trojan Women* Euripides "is challenging certain fundamental speeches and ceremonies that either express or enact the Athenian war ideology." Calling attention to a specific ceremony occurring on the occasion of the Dionysia festival, i.e., the parade of the war orphans, state-educated boys, now men, in full military uniform, Brillet-Dubois argues that through the motif of Astynanx's murder Euripides provocatively integrates the ceremony of the Athenian war orphans into the play and systematically reverses it, for the orphan of the greatest warrior of the Trojan war will not grow to manhood, be honored and be supported by the community. The orphans sitting in the front rows of the theatre, indeed, hear that Astyanax will be killed exactly because his father was "one

myth, on several occasions, Euripides calls attention to the increasing savagery throughout the Greek world during the war, and engages in the debate over certain issues raised by the war. But he also widens the perspective, for “the use of myth [...] as the raw material for tragic drama of itself dictates the necessary generality of the interaction between plot and actuality.”²⁰ The major characters are women, all victims of male abusive power; the outbreak of violence raises fundamental questions about the definition of *civilized* and, more importantly, about the issue of responsibility. The judgment of whose mistake has caused such a catastrophe is perhaps the crucial question of this Euripidean play²¹ and calls—likely in the playwright’s intention, too—for a reflection on human actions that transcends the specific mythical and historical event.

With a few exceptions, the anti-war theme, and everything it involves (such as the treatment of the conquered, the issue of responsibility, etc.), is the one that has prevailed in the history of the reception of *Trojan Women*. Quite differently from many other Euripidean plays, *Trojan Women* has not been frequently re-proposed as a whole in literature and fine arts. In these fields, some preference, in fact, has been reserved for a specific character, or a particular thematic *nucleus*, whose archetype can be found in *Trojan Women*. At times, however, the literary and/or artistic remake seems rather to rely on a combination of a few other Euripidean plays linked to the Trojan cycle: *Hecuba* and, partly, *Andromache*. Hence the impression is of a ‘fragmented’ and ‘intermixed’ reception of the play. Polyxena, Astyanax, and Cassandra, in particular, i.e., the victimization of innocent civilians for the sake of war, national security, political expediency and male abusive power, seem to have met with major success. For

of the best heroes” (l. 723), and the Greek assembly/community will not rear him (l. 723). According to this scholar, the poet polemically integrates the Athenian war ideology, not to refute it by argument, but to contrast it with the experience of war victims by spectacularly reversing that ideology. Euripides would thus invite the Athenian audience to envision the threat which is at the core of their own war ideology and to question the power and eternity of their own city, which rest on an assumption of victory.

20 Sidwell (2001) 32–3.

21 With reference to the question of responsibility, it might be useful to remember that this play was the last one of the only ‘trilogy’ that Euripides attempted to produce (Scodel 1980), which means that its full effect relied also on the spectators’ knowledge of the previous two plays, i.e., *Alexandros* and *Palamedes*. In *Alexandros* the audience had witnessed Hecuba’s rejection of the gods’ command not to raise Paris, such a deed that plays a major role in Helen’s claim of not being responsible for the war (*Trojan Women* 895–1059; see also above, n. 10). Concerning the trilogy, see also Clay (2010) 239–42.

the way in which they have been re-proposed, some interference from *Hecuba* is to be expected.

In Antiquity, since the time of the epic poem *Bellum Punicum* ("The Punic War") by the Roman poet Naevius (3rd century BC), with the association between Troy and Rome being set up in Roman culture,²² rewritings of the story of the last moments of the fallen Troy are not unusual, whether the models was the Epic Cycle or the 5th-century Athenian tragedies, especially those of Euripides. Among the lost earlier Roman tragedies (ranging from the 3rd to the 1st century BC), a mention should be reserved for Naevius' *Andromacha*, Ennius' *Hecuba* and *Andromacha Aechmalotis* ("Andromache prisoner"), and Accius' *Hecuba* and *Astyanax*.²³ In particular, Ennius' *Andromacha Aechmalotis* and Accius' *Astyanax* are assumed to treat the same subject matter as Euripides' *Trojan Women*. Ennius' play might have featured, in fact, the sacrifice of both Polyxena and Astyanax,²⁴ while Accius' would provide an innovation, i.e., an attempt of Andromache to save his son by hiding him in a wood.²⁵ This innovation might have influenced Seneca's rendition of the theme in his *Troades* ("Trojan Women") featuring—as it will be seen—an Andromache hiding Astyanax in Hector's grave, to save him from the Greeks.²⁶

The first Roman poet who re-proposes Euripides' *Trojan Women* as a whole, although very concisely and through a different literary genre, is the Augustan poet Ovid (1st century BC–1st century AD) in *Metamorphoses* 13. 404–28.²⁷ In this passage Ovid vividly outlines the last moments of the story of Troy, shaping them as a series of atrocities: the city burning (l. 408), the murder of Priam at Zeus' altar (ll. 409–10), the capture of Cassandra (ll. 410–1), the enslavement

22 This association was later used as the foundation of the ideological program of the first emperor Augustus.

23 Boyle (1994) 17. In particular about Accius' *Astyanax*, see Scafoglio (2006), who provides a detailed analysis of the surviving fragments with an emphasis on the theme of the war and its violence as relevant to the imperialistic and military aggressive attitude of the Romans already by the time of Accius: Scafoglio (2006) 9 with n. 5. Furthermore, Scafoglio (2006) 15–75 provides an accurate examination of the mythological background of the 'story' of Astyanax, from Homer to Accius.

24 Jocelyn (1967) 236–7. *Contra*, see Scafoglio (2006) 49–62.

25 Scafoglio (2006) 71–2.

26 See below, pp. 53–62, esp. 58–9. As for the possible influence by Accius on Seneca, see Fantham (1982) 65–6.

27 A valuable analysis of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 13. 404–28 with reference to Euripides' models is in Curley (2013) 102–4 (on which, see also below, n. 28). See also Stok (1988–89), who discusses Ovid's passage in relation to both Euripides, as being his model, and Seneca's *Troades*, as being his 'follower' (see below, pp. 53–62). My discussion is mainly based on these scholarly works.

of the Trojan women (ll. 412–4), the death of Astyanax, hurled down from the smoldering citadel's tower (ll. 415–7), the forced embarking of the Trojan women, as they cried: *Troia, vale! rapimur* . . . ("Troy, Farewell! *We are dragged off* . . .," ll. 418–21), and the departure of Hecuba, the last to embark (ll. 422–8). Although only few lines long, each segment of the story evokes such a vivid picture of the moment that it is capable of moving the reader's pity.²⁸ Most of the events, which are condensed in just twenty lines, are either dramatized or hinted at in Euripides' *Trojan Women*. Their sequence is partially rearranged.²⁹ *Ilion ardebat* ("Ilion was burning," l. 408) is the *incipit* of Ovid's passage: the smoking ruins set the scene. In Euripides, only at the very end do the Greeks set fire to Troy (Euripides, *Trojan Women* 1260–4): "Troy is now in flames," says, in fact, Hecuba in her farewell (ll. 1274–82). Priam's murder is only hinted at (Euripides, *Trojan Women* 16–7). Cassandra is the first to be taken as slave in Euripides' play, and the first who is mentioned as such in Ovid. The latter emphasizes the violence involved (*tractata comis*, "dragged by her hair," *Metamorphoses* 13. 410), which is only subtly implied by Euripides' Cassandra, when in her frenzied, and seemingly willing surrender, she refers to Helen as "a woman who was carried away not by force of violence . . ." (*Trojan Women* 373), as, on the contrary, Cassandra herself is indeed. The enslavement of the other women, as well as their embarking, concisely refers to the fate of the female population that constitutes the background of Euripides' play. Against this background, Ovid singles out the perhaps most pitiable spectacles: the fate of the youngest, who should have embodied the hope for the future, Astyanax (cf. Euripides, *Trojan Women* 610–708); and that of the oldest, the queen Hecuba, *miserabile visu* ("a pitiful sight," Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13. 422), who embodies the fall of Troy itself. Hecuba is the key character of Ovid's rewriting, with her metamorphosis into a dog being the ultimate target of his retelling. Ovid's reference to Hecuba frames the passage of his own 'version' of *Trojan Women*.³⁰ At lines 404–7, after the mention of the end of the war

28 With reference to the vividness of Ovid's narrative, the scenic descriptions in the *Metamorphoses*' passage reveal a peculiar tendency of the poet to appeal to the visual, thus turning his readers into spectators. Curley (2013) 101 defines Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as "a theatre of epic with the capacity to display all manner of spectacles, from emotional pathos to *violent acts only imaged by tragic audiences, but regularly observed in Rome*." (The italics are mine). Curley (2013) 95–113 analyzes *Metamorphoses* 13. 408–28 with a focus on Hecuba, exactly as a case study of this assumption.

29 This would happen as a result of the adaptation of the theatre to the epic: Curley (2013) 98; 101–2.

30 I use the term 'version' according to Hardwick's definition (2003) 10, i.e., as "a refiguration of a source (usually literary or dramatic) which is too free and selective to rank as a translation."

and the fall of Troy and Priam, Ovid focuses on Hecuba, foreshadowing her transformation: *Priameia coniux perdidit infelix hominis post omnia formam* ("Priam's wife, poor wretched, lost her human shape, after all . . .," l. 405).³¹ As in Euripides' play her pitiable sight opens and closes Ovid's *Trojan Women*-passage, with Hecuba being the last to embark (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13. 422).³² At the same time, this 'exit' from the scene of Troy, which recalls the end of Euripides' play, is refashioned in Ovid as an entrance into a new set: the shore of Chersonese in Thrace (ll. 429–30), which is the setting of another Euripidean tragedy, i.e., *Hecuba*. The lines 429–575 of *Metamorphoses* 13, which follow the *Trojan Women*-passage, echo Euripides' *Hecuba*³³ and perpetuate some of its fundamental features, such as the double death of Polydorus and Polyxena, the blinding of Polymnestor and the etiology of Cynossema. Ovid conflates *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* "into a master Euripidean 'script',"³⁴ arranging the material in a chiasmic structure (*Hecuba* at ll. 404–7, *Trojan Women* at ll. 408–28, *Hecuba* at ll. 429–576),³⁵ with the former queen of Troy being the key character, and the captive Trojan women being like the chorus in both Euripidean plays. This chorus acts as a sympathetic and supportive group that shares Hecuba's feelings.³⁶ This "expanded take on tragedy,"³⁷ built on the combination of Euripides' *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, might have had some bearing on the reshaping of the story by the slightly later author Seneca (4 BC–65 AD) in his *Troades* ("The Women of Troy").³⁸

31 As is well known, Hecuba will become a dog (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13. 565–71). As pointed out by Hopkinson (2000) 167–8 in his description of characters Ovid often uses words that allude to their final metamorphosis. This can be seen in Ovid's introduction to Hecuba, whose behavior borders on the canine: she haunts the tombs giving kisses to bones (l. 424) as she will haunt the place of her transformation, "the Bitch's Tomb" (*Kynossema*: ll. 659–70); she digs the ground to take away the ashes of Hector (l. 426), and leaves an offering of *canum crinem* (= "some white hairs": l. 427; the boldface is mine) on the tomb.

32 Cf. Euripides, *Trojan Women* 37–8 (for the opening) and 1328–30 (for the ending).

33 See, e.g., Stok (1988–89) 227 and nn. 10, 11; Hopkinson (2000) 26–7; Curley (2013) 102–13. On *Hecuba*, in Ovid, see below, p. 108.

34 Curley (2013) 104, n. 28.

35 Stok (1988–89) 227.

36 Curley (2013) 104, n. 27.

37 Curley (2013) 102.

38 With reference to Ovid's influence on Seneca, see Stok (1988–89); also below, n. 39. As far as Ovid's 'version' of Euripides' *Trojan Women* is concerned, it should be noted that, together with Andromache, another important 'captive' is omitted: Helen. Ovid, however, reserves some space to this woman, too, elsewhere, in another kind of literary genre, i.e., in *Heroides* ("Letters of Heroines") 16 and 17. On Ovid's reception of the Helen character in Ovid's *Heroides*, see below, pp. 179–80.

Natam an nepotem, coniugem an patriam fleam? ("Daughter or grandson, husband or country, which should I first weep for?," Seneca, *Troades* 1170). So Hecuba says in her last appearance in Seneca's *Troades*, as if to set the seal on a war that has not spared anyone, not even Hecuba herself, who vainly sought death (ll. 1171–7). Hecuba's mourning opens and closes Seneca's play, as she does in Euripides' *Trojan Women* and in Ovid's rewriting. In her lamenting, Seneca's Hecuba speaks as a wife, mother, grandmother, and queen who mourns the loss of her beloved (husband, children, and grandchildren), and of the whole country, i.e., her 'home'. She thus embodies a full range of the sufferings that war causes on the other side of the front, i.e., among the surviving civilians. As in Euripides, so in Seneca she sets the 'key theme' that frames the whole play, that is, the consequences of war on innocent victims: women, children, elders. Enslavement is their collective fate (Seneca, *Troades* 56–62), as in Euripides. Against this traditional background there are, however, significant innovations that, as is expected, depend on the process of adaptation of the Greek model to Seneca's authorial message and his receiving culture, i.e., Neronian Rome (1st century AD). Despite its title, Euripides' *Trojan Women* is neither the exclusive nor the main Greek model for Seneca's *Troades*. Perhaps under the influence of Ovid,³⁹ Seneca combines Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*,⁴⁰ originally selecting key features of both, adapting them to each other and to the meaning(s) that Seneca intended to convey to his readers. Far from being a replica of two juxtaposed tragedies, Seneca's remake displays a skillful narrative architecture that is built on a network of specific antitheses and correspondences. These antitheses and correspondences unfold through five acts⁴¹ and all function to emphasize the innovative traits of the play. Hecuba's appearance—as it has been seen—provides the frame, as in Euripides' *Trojan Women*; but, strikingly enough, she is not the main, unifying

39 Seneca's debt to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 13 is barely questioned by scholars: see, e.g., Fantham (1982) 30–5. For an analysis that calls also attention to the originality of Seneca, along with Ovid's possible influence, see Stok (1988–89).

40 About this combination and the several, possible precedents in Roman Literature, namely Accius' *Troades* and/or Ennius' *Andromacha Aechmalotis*, see Stok (1988–89) 228–30; Boyle (1994) 16–7; 27–8. Specifically with reference to Ennius' possible influence, also with an emphasis on Seneca's innovation, see Corsaro (1991). As for Accius, see above, p. 51 and nn. 23–26.

41 I follow the division adopted by Boyle (1994) 132, i.e., the conventional five-act division favored by Seneca. These five acts include the prologue (1–66) as Act 1. With reference to the well-designed framework of correspondences and antitheses, which guarantees some sort of unity to the plot, *contra* the often-criticized impression of incongruity, see Schetter (1965); Owen (1970); Draper (1990); Stok (1999) 6–8, and 90 n. 111.

character as in both Euripidean models. In Seneca's *Troades*, in fact, she does not appear throughout the play. As mentioned earlier, in the beginning (Act 1) she sets the scenario—despair, helplessness, laments on a fallen country already in flames, on lost people, and on the impending enslavement. This scenario Hecuba resumes at the end (Act 5), when not simply have the allotment and enslavement finally taken place, but the whole 'tragedy' of the immediate aftermath of the war has been consumed with Astyanax and Polyxena having been slain. *Concidit virgo ac puer* ("The virgin and the boy have died," l. 1167), says Hecuba in her last speech, sarcastically pushing the Greeks to finally sail in safety, a safety achieved through a double *scelus* ("crime").⁴² The double, parallel sacrifice of the *virgo* ("virgin") and the *puer* ("boy") is among the most significant products of Seneca's reworking of the two Euripidean tragedies and constitutes a central motif of his play. The enslavement of the women of Troy is, in fact, the main theme in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, where the sacrifice of Polyxena is only quickly mentioned (ll. 39–40, 261–4, 622–9), and that of Astyanax, although it is given more space, is not as central as in Seneca. In Seneca it is exactly the double sacrifice that plays the major role. Polyxena's sacrifice is drawn on Euripides' *Hecuba* where—as is well known—it occupies about half of the plot.⁴³ That of Astyanax is built on, and expanded, from Euripides' *Trojan Women*. The two sacrifices are knit together in Calchas' oracle, a novelty introduced by Seneca at the end of the Act 2. This oracle is exploited as a subtle device to provide 'a way out' for the impasse in which Pyrrhus, a new entry,⁴⁴ and Agamemnon, 'recycled' from Euripides' *Hecuba*, fall in their quarrel over the sacrifice of Polyxena. In Act 2, after Talthybius' account of the appearance of Achilles' ghost over his tomb, an altercation between Pyrrhus and Agamemnon about whether or not to satisfy the demand of Achilles with a human sacrifice, precisely Polyxena, takes place. In Seneca, Talthybius' report is an expansion of the concise reference to Achilles' appearance and

42 Twice Seneca refers to Polyxena's sacrifice as a crime by mentioning it as *facinus* ("crime") at l. 1120 and as *scelus* ("crime") at l. 1129. In Euripides, that of Polyxena is perceived as a ritual sacrifice, 'an offering' (δῶρον: *Trojan Women* 623), although somewhat blameworthy. In Seneca this same 'sacrifice' is seen as a felony. Perceived in the same way is Astyanax's sacrifice, which is, in fact, labeled as *nefas* ("impious act/violation of gods' law/crime," l. 1119). Referring to the two 'sacrifices' through three poignant words denoting evil (*facinus*, *scelus* and *nefas*) within just ten lines, Seneca builds to a climax of moral horror: Boyle (1994) 228.

43 See below, pp. 100–2.

44 Here Pyrrhus replaces Odysseus in the dispute with Agamemnon over Polyxena's sacrifice which occurs in Euripides' *Hecuba* 121–40. About Seneca's choice of Pyrrhus, see below, pp. 58–9.

demand, a reference which is made by the ghost of Polydorus in Euripides' *Hecuba* 35–44. Similarly, the subsequent quarrel over that demand is an expansion drawn both on the related debate that took place in the Greek assembly, according to the concise report of *Hecuba*'s chorus (ll. 121–40), and on the following debate over that demand between Odysseus and Hecuba (ll. 216–33). Seneca's innovation is not merely a quantitative one. Significantly the debate is carried out at length by two characters—Pyrrhus and Agamemnon—that stand for two different ways of exercising power in wartime. Pyrrhus, driven as he is by *furor* ("fury") and *ira* ("rage/wrath"), the passions condemned by the stoic Seneca,⁴⁵ personifies a despotic, unscrupulous power which relies on a simple, amoral rule according to which *quodcumque libuit facere victori licet* ("The victor can do whatever pleases him," l. 335). Agamemnon, relying on standards of moderation and propriety, personifies Seneca's *rex bonus* ("the good king/leader"), i.e., a power capable of mercy and decorum to the point of making *pudor* ("shame/modesty") the ruler where there are no law. *Quod non veta lex, hoc vetat fieri pudor* ("What law does not forbid, this shame forbids to be done," l. 334), Agamemnon replies to Pyrrhus' claim that no law impedes killing the captives. Like Seneca's *rex bonus*, Agamemnon embodies the power which is immune to passions, for only enduring with patience and moderation might guarantee a longstanding *imperium* ("ruling/government," ll. 257–8).⁴⁶ To sanction his ideas on war and power, and to make them suitable for the current political, social, and cultural context in Rome,⁴⁷ Seneca appropriated

45 *Impetus* is actually the passion ascribed to Pyrrhus through Agamemnon's mouth (Seneca, *Troades* 249–51), which Seneca condemns, as well as in *De Ira* ("On Rage") 2.3, 4–5. Regarding this, see Boyle (1994) 162.

46 About this concept of 'power with moderation,' see Seneca's *Medea* 196; *Phoenician Women* 660; also below, n. 47.

47 An echo of Nero's inclination to violence and abuse of power, and of Seneca's related attempt to restrain him, is quite transparent. Agamemnon's invitation to 'mercy' and 'moderation' is consistent with the exhortation to mercy addressed to the current emperor Nero in *De Clementia* ("On Mercy") 1.11, 4–6. Regarding this, see Petrone (1995) 110; Boyle (1994) 162. See also below, p. 58 and n. 52. Stok (1999) 19 argues that Agamemnon, however, fails to positively represent the "good king/leader" (*bonus rex*) since he would use moderation as an excuse to justify his lack of reaction to Pyrrhus' threat. *Sed meus captis quoque /scit parcere ensis* ("But my sword knows how to spare even the captives," *Troades* 349–50) are in fact the words that Agamemnon utters in an aside letting Pyrrhus, who has just insulted him as coward, go. Agamemnon could punish his recklessness, but he is able to be clement; indeed he is so even with captives! Agamemnon's words recall Augustus' imperial manifesto celebrated by the poet Virgil in *Aeneid* 6. 853: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* ("[to impose the custom of peace], to spare the vanished and put down the proud"). But Agamemnon's powerlessness turns that manifesto into a parody, since he ends up being clement with the one who is inclement exactly with the

and adapted,⁴⁸ on the one hand, the traditional impetus of Pyrrhus, who thus proves to be his father's very son; and, on the other hand, the trace of humane respect that Agamemnon shows in Euripides' *Hecuba*.⁴⁹ Replacing Odysseus of Euripides' *Hecuba* with Pyrrhus in this debate with Agamemnon over the sacrifice of Polyxena allows Seneca to replicate the Iliadic quarrel over a war-prize.⁵⁰ What is more, it adds to Seneca's adaptation in that, however preserving the figure of Ulyxes (/Odysseus), Seneca reserved it for the following debate over another sacrifice, that of Astyanax. In this debate—as we will see—"the man of many wiles" stands for another aspect of power, another negative one, complementary to that personified by Pyrrhus.

Power is apparently a key theme of Seneca's adaptation. It significantly 'opens' the play through the words of Hecuba. The woman, in fact, weeps for the ruin of Troy, lamenting the capriciousness of fortune to which power is not immune, as the fate of her country well demonstrates.⁵¹ *Non umquam tulit documenta fors maiora, quam fragili loco starent superbi* ("Never has fortune brought greater proofs [than Troy's fortune] of in how frail a place the proud stand", ll. 4–5) says Hecuba, offering herself and Troy as examples of what happens to anyone who trusts power and plays the potent lord unafraid of fickle gods (ll. 1–2). Rewriting and, more importantly, moving to the beginning

captives (i.e., Pyrrhus), thus becoming his accomplice: Stok (1999) 20. On Agamemnon, see also below, nn. 49, 55.

- 48 I use the two verbs (appropriated... adapted) according to Hardwick's definition of 'appropriation' and 'adaptation', the first being defined as "taking an ancient image or text and using it to sanction subsequent ideas or practices (explicitly or implicitly)," and the second as "a version of the source developed for a different purpose or insufficiently close to count as a translation," see Hardwick (2003) 9.
- 49 Although, as in almost all Greek literature, Agamemnon proves to be weak and to be determined only to preserve his own position rather than to do the right thing, he stands however for Hecuba with his final verdict over the dispute between Hecuba and Polymnestor (Euripides, *Hecuba* 1130–1291).
- 50 With Pyrrhus replacing Achilles, and Polyxena replacing Briseis. *Solusne totiens spolia de nobis feres?* ("Will you alone so often bear off our spoils?," l. 305) says, in fact, Pyrrhus to Agamemnon, clearly alluding to Briseis' case. Hence, on behalf of Achilles, Pyrrhus demands Polyxena as his father's war prize (l. 292), as the victim due to him in acknowledgement of his glory (l. 306).
- 51 Boyle (1994) 134 rightly observes that Seneca begins his play by rewriting the final lines of the speech that Hecuba delivers over the corpse of Astyanax in Euripides' *Trojan Women* (1203–6). Those lines are, in fact, about the capriciousness of human "fortunes" (τύχαι), and the foolishness of feeling secure in time of prosperity (cf. also, Euripides, *Hecuba* 619–28). Troy is a clear example of this conception. In Seneca, in Hecuba's words, the uncertainty of fortune takes over a more strictly political connotation because Troy becomes the symbol specifically of the precariousness of power (ll. 4–6): Petrone (1995) 107–8.

(Act 1) the final lines that in Euripides Hecuba pronounces about the precariousness of fortune (*Trojan Women* 1203–6), Seneca seems to programmatically give his play a political tone, which is accentuated by the characterization of Agamemnon in the following Act 2.⁵² Here, in his reflections on moderation, mercy, and propriety in exercising power, Agamemnon picks up the themes of the fragile basis of power and of the mutability of fortune (ll. 258–75), i.e., the themes that characterize Hecuba's initial lines. In Seneca Agamemnon's affair with Cassandra, which plays an important role in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, is just hinted at in the opening lament of Hecuba over the allotment of the women (l. 61). This omission, too, contributes to a completely political characterization of Agamemnon.⁵³ As the sacrifice of Polyxena becomes the ground for the 'political' debate mentioned above, featuring two different conceptions of power in wartime, so is the sacrifice of Astyanax, over which an *agon* between Ulyxes and Andromache takes place (Act 3).⁵⁴ And if Agamemnon is Hecuba's pendant as far as the notion of power and fortune is concerned, Ulyxes is Pyrrhus' pendant, as far as the idea of unscrupulous, coercive power is concerned. Similarly, I would think, in their call for mercy, Agamemnon and Andromache might be seen as each other's counterparts within the two parallel debates over sacrifice and power.⁵⁵ As hinted at above, Calchas' oracle is where the motifs of the two sacrifices join. The Greeks can sail only "at the usual price" (l. 360):⁵⁶ a virgin must be sacrificed on Achilles' tomb, and Pyrrhus is to hand her to his father.⁵⁷ But this is not enough: more noble blood is required, specifically that of Hector's son (ll. 361–70). What is presented as a demand from gods is soon revealed for what it really is: a *facinus* ("crime") under a religious cover. "Do you seek to hide behind the seer and blameless gods? This crime is from your heart" (. . . *hoc est pectoris facinus tui*: ll. 748–9),⁵⁸

52 See Petrone 1995.

53 Regarding this, see Stok (1999) 17–8.

54 About Seneca's characterization of Ulyxes in this *agon*, and the possible literary sources, see Corsaro (1991) 83.

55 About Agamemnon in this play (also above, nn. 44, 49), scholars have offered different interpretations, each highlighting a specific trait, such as weakness, *humanitas*, clemency, guilty conscience, examination of conscience, and so forth. For a concise summary, see Stok (1999) 17–8 with nn. 40–42.

56 There is an evident reference to the sacrifice of Iphigenia: Boyle (1994) 171.

57 Upon the request of Achilles' ghost (Seneca, *Troades* 191–6, spec. 195–6), this virgin must be Polyxena. It seems that the motif of the appearance of Achilles' ghost and of its demand for Polyxena has first been featured by Sophocles' lost tragedy *Polyxena*: see Boyle (1994) 17. On Achilles and Polyxena see, also, below, pp. 63–4 and nn. 76–78.

58 It might be useful to remember that in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, when reporting to Andromache the decision of the Assembly over the fate of Astyanax, Talthybius explicitly

cries Andromache when she fails in her effort to save Astyanax, resorting to her maternal love⁵⁹ and thus hoping to move Ulyxes (e.g., ll. 694–704). But the only answer of the *scelerum artifex* (“contriver of frauds and crimes”)—as eventually Andromache labels Ulyxes (l. 750)—is: *magis Pelasgae me tamen matres movent, quarum iste magnos crescit in luctus puer* (“but, the Pelasgian mothers, to whose great grief this boy would grow, move me more [than you, i.e., Andromache],” l. 737). Such an admission betrays the political nature of the decision which is behind the sacrifice of Astyanax: his life is a threat for the Greeks’ sons (l. 590); allowing Astyanax to live means *bella Telemacho para(re)* (“to nurture wars against Telemachus,” l. 593). Peace would be uncertain, and fear would force the Greeks to always look back, unable to definitely feel safe as long as Astyanax, alive, could give heart to the conquered Trojans (ll. 529–33). It is a question of ‘national security’, which Ulyxes cynically champions, thus embodying another side of power, which is complementary to the violent, tyrannical, and coercive side represented by Pyrrhus. Ulyxes’ arguments fit, indeed, what we can call *Realpolitik* (“practical politics”). As is well known, *Realpolitik* is a questionable political practice, merely based on a power lacking any ethical and ideological principle, aiming at self-serving means, and guided by expediency, i.e., by merely pragmatic considerations. If blind impetus leads Pyrrhus toward such a practice of power, subtle devising leads Ulyxes.⁶⁰ Both, however, are sides of the same coin, an unscrupulous exercise of power over defenseless people. Exploiting some traditional features of these mythic characters, Seneca adapts them to the expression of notions that inform his works and activity, and could sound familiar to his audience. The need of moderation in ruling (*clementia*), the precarious, illusory nature of power, the evil of blind passions (*furor, ira, impetus*), and, perhaps more importantly, the incompatibility between ethics and power are all central to Seneca’s works. Troy might thus be a metaphor for the imperial Rome ruled by Nero and altogether based on horrors, fear, coercion, and blood.⁶¹ The fallen Troy might mirror a ‘bloody’, somewhat amoral Rome to which people were accustomed, for they did go to watch cruel spectacles at the amphitheatre. And, by way of metaphor, exactly

says that Odysseus prevailed in a speech before the Assembly, thus persuading the Greeks about the ‘danger’ posed by the child (ll. 721–3).

59 I shall go back to this motif of maternal love: see below, p. 62.

60 Indeed, Ulyxes subjects Andromache to what is commonly known, in our time, as ‘police interrogation’ or ‘criminal investigation’, using almost the same ‘tactics,’ such as exploiting the weaknesses of the suspect, relying on the stress that the suspect is experiencing during the interrogation, studying her/his body language (see, e.g., ll. 615–8) using some sort of ‘blackmail’ (see, e.g., ll. 634–41), and so forth.

61 See above, pp. 56–7 and n. 47.

as spectacles Seneca represents the horrors of that *Realpolitik*. In the final Act (esp., ll. 1124–6) the messenger's report about the execution of Astyanax and Polyxena is, in fact, pervaded by the metaphor of the theatre: his narration becomes a reported spectacle which occurred in an amphitheatre-shaped place (*theatri more*, "like a theatre", l. 1125) where the Greeks, and partly the Trojans, gathered as eager spectators to watch (*spectat*, l. 1129) the execution.⁶² It is reasonable to think that the comparison *theatri more* and the reference to the rush of the mass filling that amphitheatre-shaped place (ll. 1125–6) are meant to recall contemporary customs, the centrality of the theatre in imperial Rome, especially in Nero's Rome,⁶³ and the questionable nature of the spectacle of the time.⁶⁴ The anachronism⁶⁵ involved in the allusion is a result of the adaptation process of the Greek model to Seneca's Rome, with all the implicit criticism of power and of contemporary customs that it carries out.

Although prominent, power is certainly not the only innovative theme springing from Seneca's re-elaboration. The same central events of Seneca's *Troades*, i.e., the double sacrifice with the parallel debates over each of them and the 'political' stand of the debaters, lays the foundation for another theme peculiarly relevant to Seneca's thought: death, or, to say it better, the dilemma of the soul's mortality / immortality.⁶⁶ The concern for the afterlife of human soul, whether death dissolves it or it survives, is a constant in Seneca's works (both philosophical and poetic) and is subjected to contradictory views. Denial and belief in the immortality of the soul in fact coexist in Seneca's thought. This contradiction marks the first two choral odes of the play and is significantly resumed in the final Act as Astyanax and Polyxena seem each to embody one of the two positions. The second choral ode (ll. 371–408) is entirely a reflective ode on death, which starts with the women's questioning about *umbras* ("ghosts", *lato sensu* 'soul'), which survive buried corpses, and ends with not

62 Boyle (1994) 229 observes that *spectare* is used as a technical term for "theatrical viewing," see, e.g., Cicero, *De Oratore* ("On the Orator") 1.18. Indeed, 'spectator' is the Latin word used to indicate members of a theatre audience (e.g., Horace, *Ars Poetica* ["The Art of Poetry"] 182) as well as "spectator" at games: Boyle (1994) 225.

63 See Boyle (1994) 34–7.

64 As is well known, Seneca condemned the bloody game-spectacles that usually occurred at the amphitheatre, where the death of men was 'the spectacle': see, e.g., Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium* ("Letters to Lucilius") 19. 33. Those were the spectacles in which, notoriously, Nero took delight.

65 Calder (1970) 76.

66 Many scholars have been discussing this theme in Seneca's *Troades*, above all with reference to the second choral ode. My comment is based on Davis (1989); Boyle (1994) 172–3; Marino (1996).

simply an explicit denial of the afterlife, but also an expression of complete nihilism, for “death itself is nothing” (l. 397). This position will be resumed by Polyxena, happy to die rather than live and marry Pyrrhus—as she would be falsely told by Helen (ll. 861–87). For Polyxena death is non-existence, and thus preferable to a life where she would join in marriage with the killer of her father. The girl finds comfort and strength in her belief in the soul’s extinction. In striking contrast with this view⁶⁷ is the one expressed in the first choral through the *makarismos* (“calling blessed”) of Priam, which the women of the chorus performed upon Hecuba’s suggestion (ll. 142–63). Blessed is Priam, for he walks free from sorrows and miseries in Elysium.⁶⁸ Here death as freedom is coupled with death as survival in the ‘afterlife’. This faith in the afterlife is shared by Andromache (ll. 790–1) and is then resumed by Astyanax. For the boy, in contrast with Polyxena, there is comfort to be gained from the belief in the survival of the soul. Seneca’s philosophical activity obviously bears some weight on his adaptation; it provides a framework for the dramatic treatment of fundamental questions, such as the nature of death. Such a focus on death in this play might be the result of some peculiar features of Seneca’s refashioning, i.e., of the fact that, as I have been discussing so far, the central action is about the taking of two lives, not to mention the appearance of two dead men (Achilles and Hector).

The motifs of power and of death pervade the entire play, almost intertwining with each other. It is, however, possible to identify other significant thematic threads in the fabric of Seneca’s adaptation, such as grief and despair. Certainly in the footsteps of Euripides, Seneca displays a special attention to the mother’s grief. There is, indeed, a certain insistence on the mother’s tears. First in the altercation with Pyrrhus, Agamemnon—he who would not even have spared the child that the mother carries still in her body (cf. Homer, *Iliad*

67 It should be recalled that in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, exactly with regard to Polyxena’s death, Andromache argues that death is preferable to an unhappy, sorrowful life (ll. 635–42): see above, n. 9. A life of sorrow would, in fact, be the life of Seneca’s Polyxena, should she really have to marry Pyrrhus (as Helen wanted her to believe: Seneca, *Troades* 865–7, 871–82). I would think that perhaps, as a result of Seneca’s combination of the two Euripidean source-texts (*Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*), not only does Polyxena appropriate, in a way, the paradox of Euripides’ Andromache, but she also materializes it by offering herself to death (ll. 1147–59).

68 *Mors dolorum omnium exsolutio est et finis ultra quam mala nostra non exeunt* (“Death is a release from all sufferings, and a boundary beyond which our ills do not pass”), Seneca wrote in *Consolatio ad Marciam* (“Consolation for Marcia”) 19.5, where in particular he developed this philosophic theme pertaining to death as a form of freedom from pains and, thus, as a source of a peaceful state.

6. 57–9)—makes a plea for compassion for the mothers who should not cry over the blood of their children (*Troades* 298–9). Then Andromache, who—almost more than in Euripides, and quite more than Hecuba herself—personifies the sorrow of war as a widow and mother. “Crashed” by the brutal death of Hector (*Troades* 411–6), she becomes accustomed to grief to the point of enduring all things *sine sensu* (“indifferent and stiff with pain,” l. 416). Yet her maternal love is what still compels her to prolong her suffering (ll. 419–21). In the name of this maternal love, Andromache supplicates Ulyxes in tears to spare her child (*miserere matris*, “have pity of a mother,” l. 694). But, as seen, Ulyxes is ‘sensitive’ to mothers’ tears only selectively, one may say, for he cares rather for the tears of the Greeks mothers (ll. 588–90).

There are also hints at the issue of responsibility, which plays a major role in Euripides. It is re-proposed with some innovations compared to the Greek model. It is Hecuba, for instance, who mentions the dream she had when pregnant with Paris and takes responsibility for her negligence (ll. 35–40). And Helen, who in Seneca serves as a collaborationist, only hints at her own innocence (ll. 903–7, 916–21) when facing the accusations of Andromache.⁶⁹ Differently from Euripides’ tragedy, Helen is more concerned with her own fate of being detestable for both victors and victims.

Although Hecuba’s last words close the play (ll. 1165–77),⁷⁰ the macabre-yet-commendable picture of the two deaths is that which remains impressed in the readers’ mind. While the gruesome description of Astyanax’s death is a concession to the ‘taste of the time’, the description of Astyanax’ and Polyxena’s approach to death mirrors the Stoics’ conception of suicide.⁷¹ They both die like ‘Stoic heroes’. *Uterque letum mente generosa tulit* (“both died with a noble heart”, l. 1064): the child, without weeping, *sponte desiluit sua* (“of his own will, jumped”, l. 1101); and the girl, who audaciously faces the mortal blow, not even in death lacks courage (ll. 1149–58). Before these youths who face death without a tear, both sides weep. The misery of war at last has its full representation here.

The play as a whole can boast a rich reception history, above all in terms of theatrical productions, during the 20th and 21st century, but it has barely

69 In Seneca, Andromache replaces Hecuba who, in Euripides, engages in an *agon* with Helen, almost bordering in sophistry (see above, pp. 47–8 and n. 11), before her husband Menelaus (Euripides, *Trojan Women* 860–1059). In Seneca, Menelaus is completely absent.

70 With the exception of the very last two lines that belong to the messenger, who exhorts the women to finally reach their ship (*Troades* 1178–9).

71 Regarding this concept, see, e.g., *Epistulae ad Lucilium* 70.5.

been refashioned either in literature or in performance before these two centuries. As hinted at above, Euripides' *Trojan Women* has mainly been concerned with a 'fragmented' and 'intermixed' reception, especially in literature and fine arts. Some of the play's main figures have been singled out and re-proposed by drawing the related portion of the story from different sources, but mainly mixing Euripides' different plays. Such is the case of Cassandra and Polyxena.⁷² As for the first, although quite ignored in the Middle Ages because her status as prophetess made her 'unchristianizable',⁷³ she appears prominently in *De Claris Mulieribus* ("On Famous Women") by the Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio (14th century AD). Giving a mythological biography of the woman in full details, Boccaccio focuses especially on her visionary skills. Apart from some presences in the Enlightenment Age (18th century), she re-appears in the Romantic Age (19th century) with the ballad *Kassandra* (1797) by the poet, dramatist and philosopher Friedrich Schiller.⁷⁴ Her portrayal is here completely different from the traditional one and is rather concerned with the psychological and emotional side. Sad in the midst of gladness, Cassandra laments her own and Troy's fate against the joyful background of the planned marriage between her sister Polyxena and Achilles. No one pays attention to her; none seems to love her. She can only set off her knowledge against her jealousy for Polyxena's happiness, a happiness that she will never achieve.⁷⁵ Polyxena, who appears as a pendant in Schiller's ballad, is the other main figure that has been singled out in the reception history of this play before the contemporary era. The preferred framework of the remakes is exactly the one of Schiller's ballad, i.e., her marriage with Achilles. It is a motif somewhat present in Euripides'

72 For the main royal female characters, i.e., Hecuba, Andromache, and Helen see also the related chapters in this volume (below, pp. 100–42 [*Hecuba*], 143–73 [*Andromache*], 174–98 [*Helen*]).

73 Epple (1993) 31–5.

74 Tauber (2010a) 173.

75 Still with reference to Cassandra, a mention should be reserved for Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* (1982), a novel drafted first as the fifth part of the author's lectures on poetics given at the University of Frankfurt in 1982. It features an autobiographical prose monologue by Cassandra herself, and it is designed on the character of this woman as she appears in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*: see, e.g., Glau (1996). Her struggle to have voice and space in a world that would not give her any credit reflects emblematically the female writer's struggle to find her voice and place in a male world. Wolf never mentioned Euripides' *Trojan Women*. Nonetheless, according to Willis (2005) 217–22, Wolf's characterization of Cassandra had such an influence on the contemporary production of the Euripidean play by the German director Christoph Schroth in 1982 that it allows for links to be made between Euripides' *Trojan Women* and Wolf's novel (see also below, n. 137).

Trojan Women and *Hecuba* and, even more explicitly, in Seneca's *Troades*.⁷⁶ The myth of the love story of Achilles and Polyxena has perhaps been built on the motif of Achilles' demand for Polyxena's sacrifice over his tomb.⁷⁷ In the Middle Ages, the hero's love for the Trojan princess becomes the focus of his fate at Troy.⁷⁸ This specific motif involving Polyxena, and just hinted at in the Greek and Roman tragedies, inspired the 17th-century French dramatist Pierre Corneille who wrote the tragedy *La mort d'Achille* ("The death of Achilles") in 1673.⁷⁹ Innovatively, the French playwright complicates the dramatic conflict through a 'chain of love', which includes the Iliadic concubine, Briseis, and the hero's son, Pyrrhus. Achilles, who no more returns Briseis' love, falls in love with Polyxena, who in turn seeks the love of his son, Pyrrhus. The marriage is arranged, but Achilles is killed by Paris in the temple before the celebration. Almost on the same track, i.e., still with a focus on the romantic theme rather than on the heroic one (i.e., sacrifice), is the Austrian H. J. von Collin's tragedy *Polyxena* (1804): here it is Neoptolemus/Pyrrhus who is in love with Polyxena, and her sacrifice drives him to madness.

As for the tragedy as a whole, before its 'resurrection' in the 20th and 21st century, mention is to be reserved for Johann Elias Schlegel's *Die Trojanerinnen* ("The Trojan Women") in 18th century.⁸⁰ Originally entitled *Hekuba*, written in 1736 and revised between 1742 and 1745, to be finally published in 1747, it combines the plots of Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, and integrates them with some features taken from Seneca's *Troades*. Adapting characters and meanings to the cultural context of the 18th century, in the name of rationalism Schlegel makes a mockery of the doctrine of benevolent Providence (with Providence being the equivalent of the pagan/Greek gods). Hecuba becomes a virtuous 18th-century character who cherishes and relies on a benevolent Providence, only to be cruelly disappointed at the end, since her virtue is not rewarded. Until the very end her trust in Providence is unshakeable; and in front of the sacrifice of the innocent Polyxena and Astyanax, rather than blaming or denying Providence, she proves to be incapable of any reaction, dazed

76 Seneca, *Troades* 942–4: Achilles demands Polyxena to be sacrificed on his tomb, "so that in the Elysian fields he may be her husband" (l. 944). For an earlier source about this motif, see, e.g., Apollodorus, *Epitome* 5.23. On this motif, see also below, nn. 77–78.

77 There are indeed different versions of the motif of Achilles' love for Polyxena (see, e.g., Hyginus *Fabulae* 110). It was quite a renowned myth, as its frequent occurrence in the ancient iconography well proves: see below, p. 69.

78 Indeed, several revivals treated the theme of Achille's death in the context of his love for Polyxena: see, e.g., Gödde (2010) 4–5.

79 Regarding this and other revivals in the literature of the early modern period, see Gödde (2010) 6–7.

80 See Heitner (1963) 81–5.

with grief. Andromache, too, who similarly has faith in a just providence, is reluctant to reproach the gods for the cruel deeds: their fault, if any, was not to prevent the Greeks from masking their wickedness with religion. In Schlegel's remake it is Agamemnon who far more conveys an enlightened view of the gods. He does not trust priests; instead he makes his reason be the arbiter of religious truth, refusing to yield to authority when it is not consistent with his conception of the gods. Hence his attempt to save Polyxena would be a triumph of rational will power. But he does not succeed.

It has been observed⁸¹ that Euripides' *Trojan Women* might have suffered from the association with *Hecuba*, which has usually been preferred, as it was in the Renaissance, due to the popularity of the Latin translation (1524) by the Humanist Erasmus. Later on, by early 19th century, obscurity was caused by several aesthetic criticisms of the play for being episodic and a mere sequence of lamentations, for lacking action or plot and heroes. In other words, it was judged as not adhering to the Aristotelian standards of a good tragedy. It was the German philosopher and poet August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767–1845), one of the founders of the German Romantic Movement, who definitely 'condemned' *Trojan Women* for a while, promoting the so-called '*damnatio* of Euripides' ("condemnation of Euripides").⁸² Schlegel indicted the play for its lack of unified action and for its overwhelming emotional nature. He in fact labeled it as an accumulation of helpless suffering which exhausts the audience's compassion. It was early in the 20th century that scholars rescued this tragedy from the '*damnatio*'. The redemption comes through the 1905-verse translation of the play by the renowned British scholar Gilbert Murray, which constituted the script for many productions in the first half of the century in Britain as well as in the U.S.⁸³ Murray's rehabilitation of this tragedy contributed to elevating it to the status of ideal war/antiwar play. Equating the Athenian and British empires, through scholarly works Murray showed that Euripides' *Trojan Women* could be used to critique imperial behavior in the colonies. He openly opposed the wars of the British Empire against their colonized Africans who were fighting for freedom and settled two independent republics (the Boer Wars: 1880–1881, 1899–1902). Murray's translation, indeed, was received by the contemporary public as a play that exemplified his pro-Boer program.⁸⁴

81 See Willis (2005) 3–5; 20–2.

82 See Schlegel (1840) 179; Behler (1986).

83 In the U.S. it was used in several productions that aimed at promoting the objectives of the Women's Peace Party: see, e.g., Foley (2012) 62–3. For a detailed production history of this tragedy based on Murray's translation, see Willis (2005) 20–94.

84 It might be interesting to note that 'Boer' is an Afrikan word meaning 'freedom.'

It is, however, in the second half of the 20th century that the play experiences such a deep adaptation that it was transformed into a modern anti-war and anti-colonial *cri de coeur* (“cry from the heart”). This is the result of *Les Troyannes* (“The Trojan Women,” 1965), an adaptation of Euripides’ play by the French philosopher, writer and political activist Jean-Paul Sartre.⁸⁵ Where Murray suggested a parallel between British and Athenian colonial activity, Sartre reshapes Euripides’ representation of the Greek invasion of Troy in such a way that it parallels French colonialism in Africa. He intended to denounce the atrocities of French Imperialism in Algeria. Hence Troy came to symbolize the plight of a third world nation,⁸⁶ and the Trojan women became identifiable as Algerian women. In order to convey his critique against the war and his anti-colonial protest, Sartre significantly changed the language of the text, introducing anachronistic words, such as Europe:

I speak a few times of “Europe.” The idea is modern, but corresponds to the ancient opposition between Greeks and barbarians, between Greater Greece [...] and the establishments of Asia Minor, where Athenian colonial imperialism reigned with a ferocity Euripides denounces pitilessly.

So Sartre states in the introduction of his adaptation.⁸⁷ Exploiting and adapting Andromache’s questioning about how the Greeks consider the Trojans barbarians while they themselves kill children (Euripides, *Trojan Women* 764), Sartre transforms her tirade against Helen, blamed for the death of Astyanax and the ruin of Troy (Euripides, *Trojan Women* 766–73), into an anti-colonial attack:

*Hommes de l’Europe, / Vous méprisez l’Afrique et l’Asie / et vous nous appelez barbares... / mais quand le gloriole et la cupidité / vous jettent chez nous, / vous pillez, vous torturez, vous massacrez.*⁸⁸

(“Men of Europe, you feel repugnance for Africa and Asia, and call us barbarians..., but when vanity and greed throw you on us, you plunder, you torture, you massacre”).

85 See Sartre (1968); Willis (2005) 4–5; 111–22; also Goff (2009) 80–3. My discussion is built on these sources.

86 On Sartre’s social and political activism, carried out through his literary production, see Willis (2005) 112–4.

87 Sartre (1968) 130.

88 Sartre (1965) 47.

Sartre also extends his denunciation of war in general to a denunciation of nuclear war in particular, reflecting the current threat and risk of such a war. Adapting Euripides' equation between conquerors and conquered to a possible scenario of an atomic war, Sartre alerts his audience that there would be no victors or victims in such a war, "... that is precisely what the play demonstrates. The Greeks have destroyed Troy, but they shall not enjoy any of the spoils of this victory," says Sartre.⁸⁹ For him war is a defeat of humanity and can but end in 'total nihilism'. This is the message he puts in Poseidon's mouth at the end of his play, where the god appears as a *deus ex machina* warning against war: *vous en créerez / tous*⁹⁰ ("[war] will kill you, all of you"). No human being would escape the effect of an atomic war; there would be no hope for survival. In this nihilist and hopeless context, there is no space for mourning. Hecuba is a rebel and a militant. Similarly, the Trojan women represent modern-day protesters rather than mourners. The driving motif of the play, i.e., the mothers' lamentation, which has usually been drawing the audience's sympathetic reaction, is completely lost.⁹¹

Sartre's deliberate reworking of this ancient text for explicit political ends is a milestone in the reception history of this tragedy, and it paved the way for subsequent stage and cinematic adaptations set in the context of other similar 20th-century agonies. The universal becomes specific; the Trojan women become Balkan women, as the warriors come to be identifiable as American military, or Israeli Defense Forces, etc. As it will be seen, Sartre's work prepared the ground for a new era of *avant-garde* interpretation both in Europe and in the United States.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

With one exception, as far as we know, single and salient episodes of the last moments of Troy, as portrayed in Euripides (or in the poetic sources on which Euripides himself might have relied) and as subsequently depicted in Seneca, have been among the favorite mythical themes in the visual arts from antiquity, namely from the 5th–4th-century BC Attic vase paintings, to modern times.⁹²

89 Sartre (1968) 130.

90 Sartre (1965) 78.

91 About this 'disservice' to the spirit of the original, see Loraux (1998) 13.

92 It is, of course, not possible to give a complete account of the various artworks—various in terms of the artistic products themselves and of the episode/character which has been

Some preference has been given to the sacrifice of the two youths, and the sacrilegious treatment of Cassandra by Ajax, which is only hinted at in Euripides. In antiquity this episode of violence became the main scene depicted, above all in vase-paintings,⁹³ due to Cassandra's "lack of iconographic character."⁹⁴ Her main feature in fact, i.e., her prophetic ability and the related disbelief, certainly posed a problem of representation for the artists. Besides in vase-paintings, the episode appears in the *Chest of Cypselus*, probably manufactured in the mid-6th century BC, located in the Temple of Hera in Olympia and well described by 2nd-century AD Greek geographer Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 5.17–19.10).⁹⁵ The painter Polygnotus (5th century BC), too, concerned himself with this episode. According to the account of Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 10.26.3), his painting of the *Ilioupersis* ("The sack of Troy") located in the Cnidian *lesche* at Delphi, portrayed Ajax and Cassandra with the statue of Athena (the *Palladium*) pulled from its plinth. The 'lack of iconographic character' of Cassandra applied to the following periods. It is, in fact, still the episode of the violence that she suffered which continued to engage the interest of the artists. Such is the case of the Pre-Raphaelites (19th century).⁹⁶ Interestingly related to the anti-war significance of Euripides' *Trojan Women* is a sculpture produced in 1947, i.e., after the Second World War, by the German artist Gerhard Marcks. Decorating the façade of the St. Katherine church at Lübeck, the sculpture represents a woman (perhaps, Cassandra?) with a face contorted in pain and in a resigned attitude. On each side of the sculpture are other figures that recall the final moments of Troy: a fire raiser, a mother with child, a prophet. This sculpture was conceived as a monument to the Second World War and its atrocities.

As for the motif of the sacrifice of Astyanax, it has been identified in a 5th-century Attic vase painting where a major role is played by his mother Andromache. Differently from her literary portrayal, Andromache takes on a role of an active and energetic woman, for she is depicted as strenuously

singled out in a specific work. The survey proposed above aims at mentioning some of the most representative artworks where the poetic matrix might prominently be either Euripides or Seneca, with a few exceptions, as in the case of Cassandra and of the *Tabula Iliaca Capitulina* ("Iliadic Table" preserved in the "Capitoline" museums in Rome): see below, pp. 69–70.

93 Mangold (2000).

94 Epple (1993) 383.

95 Made from cedar wood and decorated with gold and ivory plaques, as described by Pausanias, it was a votive gift from the tyrant of Corinth, Cypselus, to the temple of Hera in Olympia.

96 See, e.g., Tauber (2010a) 174.

defending Astyanax with a stick when he is about to be dragged away.⁹⁷ As in antiquity, so in the following periods, Astyanax and Andromache appear rather frequently in scenes recalling the encounter between Hector and Andromache as told by Homer (*Iliad* 6. 390–496),⁹⁸ and less frequently in the dramatic scene of the murder of the child. Among these rare representations are the 18th-century paintings of two French artists: Gabriel-Francois Doyen's *Andromache stricken with grief before Ulysses* (1763), and Francois-Guillaume Menageot's *Astyanax torn from the arms of Andromache by order of Ulysses* (1783).

Particularly preferred and loved by painters since antiquity is the theme of Polyxena's sacrifice.⁹⁹ Pausanias (*Description of Greece* 1.22.6; 10.25.10) describes two paintings, one in Athens and the other in Pergame, which portray this episode. Conspicuous savagery and ferocity characterize the depiction of the episode in a 5th-century BC *amphora* which shows Polyxena kept by three warriors while Neoptolemus cut her throat, dropping her blood over Achilles' tomb.¹⁰⁰

The one exception, which I mentioned at the *incipit* of this paragraph, consists of a representation of the 'destruction of Troy' as a whole, although it looks like a set of juxtaposed tableaux depicting some crucial scenes that appear in Euripides' tragedy, too. Its poetic source is not Euripides, but, according to what is inscribed in it, the poet Stesichorus (6th century BC), author of an *Ilioupersis* ("The Sack of Troy").¹⁰¹ The artwork in question is the so-called *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina* ("Iliadic Table, preserved in the Capitoline museums in Rome"), a Roman monument of the 1st century AD, which was found at Bovillae on the Appian way (near Rome).¹⁰² It is probably a Roman copy of an earlier work by the Greek sculptor Theodoros.¹⁰³ The central section of this *Tabula* is inscribed with *Ιλίου πέρις κατὰ Στησίχορον* ("the sack of Troy

97 Now in Paris (Louvre). On this vase, see Taubner (2010b) 71.

98 See, e.g., Tauber (2010b) 71–2.

99 It should however be noted that since antiquity some special preference has been given to the romantic theme of the encounter and love between Achilles and Polyxena as well: Kossatz-Deissmann (1981) 1.2: 77–84 (figs. 206–275); Touchefeu-Meynier (1994) VII.2: 346 (figs. 6–16).

100 See Touchefeu-Meynier (1994) VII.2: 347 (fig. 26). For a full discussion on Polyxena's sacrifice in visual arts, see below, pp. 114–7.

101 Stesichorus' poem (on which, also, above, n. 2) did not survive entirely. A reconstruction of its content based on the few fragments and sources at our disposal is in Bowra (1961) 101–6. For the surviving fragments, see Davis (1991) 1: 183–205.

102 See Bowra (1961) 105–6. A detailed analysis of the possible relationship between Stesichorus' poem and the depictions of the bas-relief is in Scafoglio 2005.

103 See Sadurska (1964) 24–37; Horsfall (1979) 27.

according to Stesichorus”), and it in turn falls into three parts.¹⁰⁴ The middle part shows the tombs of Hector and Achilles: they set the scenario for the two sacrifices, respectively, of Hector’s son and of the ‘wife’ of Achilles. The latter is performed by Neoptolemus before Odysseus and Calchas. Interestingly, in the other portions of the *Tabula*, in addition to some very dramatic motifs of the last moments of Troy (e.g., murderer of Priamus at Zeus’ altar, rape of Cassandra, etc.), there is one in particular which is somewhat implied in Euripides. It is a ‘segment’ that has enjoyed some representations in art since antiquity. It is a scene that represents the encounter between Menelaus and Helen—which, as seen, Euripides also dramatized. It alludes to the ‘fatal’ allure of Helen’s sight about which Euripides’ Hecuba warned Menelaus (*Trojan Women* 891–2). The scene shows Menelaus dropping his sword at the sight of her.¹⁰⁵

Music

Out of the Trojan women, Cassandra and, to a lesser degree, Andromache have both captured the interest of composers since the 18th century.¹⁰⁶ For both figures the source is often a combination of tragedies of related content, even by different playwrights. Such is the case of Cassandra, for whom an influence from Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, too, can be detected.¹⁰⁷ There is, however, one peculiar opera, one of the most important masterpieces related to ancient mythological stories, in which Cassandra and the motif of the innocent victims of war can be traced back to Euripides, with all the due adaptive and innovative features being considered. It is the French opera *Les Troyens* by the well-known composer Hector Berlioz.¹⁰⁸ Conceived between 1856 and 1858, when Berlioz was at the *acme* of his creative power, it was first performed in 1863 at Paris. It basically draws upon Virgil’ *Aeneid*, although some figures, including Cassandra and the Trojan women, refer to their Greek tragic model, Euripides.

104 For a full description of all the three parts, see Scafoglio (2005) 115.

105 It was quite a popular theme of the 5th-century vase paintings which show, on one side, Menelaus rushing to kill Helen with his sword raised, while on the other side, Menelaus dropping his sword at the sight of Helen: see Kahil (1988) IV.1: 542–4; IV.2: 337–44 (figs. 260–277). This representation further testifies to the dangerous power of her gaze, as Hecuba’s words clearly state. On Helen’s power of seduction through her gaze and its re-proposition in works of modern reception, see Vivante (2013), on which also below, p. 92 and n. 177.

106 In the list of opera and musical works on the Trojan myth provided by McDonald, out of the 15 titles, 7 concern Cassandra: McDonald (2001) 114.

107 See, e.g., Brown (2004) 296–7, who also provides a concise list of operatic versions of Euripides’ *Trojan Women*; also Tauber (2010a) 174–5.

108 For a detailed analysis attentive to musical technicalities, too, see McDonald (2001) 89–114.

It consists of two parts: *La prise de Troie* (“The conquest of Troy”) in two acts and based on *Aeneid* 2; and *Les Troyens à Carthage* (“The Trojans at Carthage”) in three acts and based on *Aeneid* 1 and 4. In the first part Cassandra takes over Aeneas’ major role during the fall of Troy—as recounted by Virgil in *Aeneid* 2. Lamenting, over and over, the blindness of the Trojans, and vainly warning them by revealing the true horror of war, Cassandra dominates this first part as Dido, the queen of Carthage, will dominate the second. Cassandra is indeed a heroic counterpart to Dido: both are victims to empire, and both, together with the Trojan women, are victims of men’s violent foolishness. As in Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, so in Berlioz’s portrayal of Cassandra and of her role in *La prise de Troie*, the suffering of women from war replaces the glory of men in war. In Berlioz the suffering takes a heroic overtone in that Cassandra chose to die rather than be ashamed in captivity. She does not see any other way out than death for herself and the other Trojan women, unless they accept enslavement by the Greeks. She transforms the failure of her prophetic gift into a success, persuading the other women to join her, confident that they will gain eternal glory in the memory of the founders of a new Troy in Italy. In front of the Greek soldiers Cassandra stabs herself and gives the sword to Polyxena, who follows her example. The other women, too, kill themselves with knives or by throwing themselves from a parapet. The music emphasizes the emotion and raises admiration for those brave women who refuse to lower their standards and who appear as strong as men in defending their future.

As far as Andromache is concerned, her success on the operatic stage is mainly associated with *Astianatte* (“Astyanax”), a libretto by the Italian composer Antonio Salvi (1701), which, in turn, is partly based on *Andromaque* (“Andromache,” 1667) by the French playwright Jean Racine.¹⁰⁹ Specifically tied to Euripides’ *Trojan Women* is *Andromache’s Farewell* (1963) by the American composer Samuel Barber.¹¹⁰ Composed for soprano and orchestra, and commissioned by the New York Philharmonic to celebrate its opening season at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, it stages Andromache’s speech of farewell to Astyanax from Euripides’ play. With Troy burning in the background, just before dawn, Andromache has received the order to give her son to the Greeks. They have ordered that the child be hurled from the walls of the town to his death. In the midst of her anger, despair, and sorrow, which the music

109 For a fuller discussion of the musical reception of Andromache character, see below, pp. 158–64. On Salvi’s *Astianatte* see Ograjenšek (2010) 131–4. Salvi’s libretto constituted the textual basis for several opera on the same subject: see Tauber (2010b) 71.

110 See Morford/Lenardon (2007) 768; Tauber (2010b) 73.

captures effectively, Andromache bids him farewell, beginning with the touching words: "So you must die, my son."¹¹¹

The suffering of the Trojan women from war provides a suitable subject above all for 20th-century composers. In 1973, the Polish composer Joanna Bruzdowicz composed a musical tragedy based on Euripides' *Trojan Women* and entitled *Les Troyennes*. It was deliberately conceived as a protest against war. With the same objective, the German composer Aribert Reimann, who had been a child in Berlin during the Second World War, adapted Euripides' play, composing the *Troades*, first performed in Munich in 1986. Significantly his score begins with the motto *Krieg ist Wahnwitz* ("War is madness").¹¹² More recently, as a reaction to the crisis in Bosnia, the British composer Nigel Osborne wrote *Sarajevo: An Opera*, first presented in 1994 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London.¹¹³ This three-parts opera originated from the composer's activism in the Balkans. Euripides' *Trojan Women* forms the basis of the first part, which is entitled *The Women*, and partially of the third part, which is entitled *The Sandstorm*. *The Women* is built on Osborne's comparison between Troy and the experiences of its female captives with the situation of Sarajevo. It is basically a shortened version of Euripides' play, with three main women: Hecuba and Andromache, both played by actresses from ex-Yugoslavia, and Cassandra, played by a British actress. This part of the opera did not contain much music, only pre-recorded tape and some gong sounds. *The Sandstorm* featured a long lament over the loss of a child, clearly an equivalent of the funeral of Astyanax in Euripides' play. Despite some criticism, it was received as something more than an updated version of the story of the Trojan War.

Dance

In April 1938, an adaptation of Euripides' *Trojan Women*, meant to be 'experimental', was produced as dance drama by the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) and was entitled *Trojan Incident*. At that time the Federal Theatre Project was under the direction of Hallie Flanagan, Professor of Theater at Vassar College.¹¹⁴ Being a part of president Roosevelt's "Emergency Relief Appropriation Act" (1935), established to relieve the American economy from the Great Depression, the Federal Theatre Project was responsible for the nationwide theatrical productions of classic and newly commissioned plays with the purpose of promoting

111 See Wentzel (2010) 438. A full discussion on the variety of the musical materials that the composer used to create a dramatic impact in this opera is in Follet 1997. For a choreography drawn on Barber's composition, see below, p. 75.

112 Regarding this, see Brown (2004) 296–7.

113 See Brown (2004) 297; Willis (2005) 290–3.

114 See Willis (2005) 90–3; Davis (2010); Foley (2012) 88–92.

the employment of thousands of out-of-work directors, actors, stage-costume designers, and technicians. Especially under the direction of Prof. Flanagan, the immediate purpose of the Federal Theatre Project, i.e., work-relief, was flanked by a long-term artistic and socio-political goal: the establishment of a “workers’ theatre.” This kind of theatre was to be vital to contemporary community life and to contribute to changing the world by promoting civic self-consciousness and raising awareness of current issues.¹¹⁵ Apparently it had a clear social agenda; not surprisingly, it was soon accused of spreading communist propaganda. Indeed, after the performance of the *Trojan Incident*, which opened on 21 April 1938 at the St. James Theatre in New York City and ran for about 26 rehearsals within one month, Prof. Flanagan had to appear before the Senate House committee of Un-American Activities to defend herself and the Federal Theatre Project from the charge of Communism (on 6 December 1938). During the hearing Euripides was invoked by a senator who implied that the Greek playwright was a communist (!).¹¹⁶ The struggle over this production was about both its antiwar content and the role of government in society. The dance drama *Trojan Incident* was the first Greek tragedy produced by the Federal Theater Project, and it was the first re-proposing of Euripides’ *Trojan Women* on the American professional stage after it faded away, for twenty years, as the U.S. entered the First World War. The text was adapted by Flanagan’s husband, Philip H. Davis, professor of Greek at Vassar College. Prof. Davis radically modernized the source material, drawing both on Euripides’ play and on Homer, striving for topical immediacy but retaining the plot of the ancient play and the ancient performance features. To update the play, Prof. Davis set the action in a ‘timeless’, yet recognizable, modern world. All references to ancient place-names (except for Greece and Troy) were removed. Furthermore, the actors wore modern dresses. Since the beginning an antiwar critical tone is identifiable: the Homeric idea of heroic struggle and of its glory is replaced by cynical motives. A conspiratorial scene with Odysseus opens the play, cynically revealing the intentions of the Greeks: they want war, not Helen. The ‘rebel’ Thersites, who voiced the troops’ tiredness and desire for an end, is mercilessly killed, and, as the lights fade, Odysseus prompts the generals to draw lots for the women. With the lights back, a pathetic tableau of Trojan women refugees after the sack is shown to the audience. They are no more a

115 Prof. Flanagan distinguished two kinds of theatres in the United States, opposite to each other: the “commercial theatre,” just aiming at making money, without any social, educational agenda; and the “workers’ theatre,” which was out to change the world: Davis (2010–2011) 457.

116 For an extract of Flanagan’s testimony along with the senator’s accusation, see Davis (2010–2011) 457–8 and n. 4.

group. At the end, the chorus however finds new strength by collectively foreseeing a future without war.

Since this was a dance-musical production, the chorus plays a major role. Indeed *Trojan Incident* had two choruses: a singing chorus, which was the voice of people, and a dancing chorus, the people's body. Among the characters, Cassandra is singled out. She has the same, if not more, weight as Hecuba; indeed she is the primary 'vessel' of the message of the play. As she enters, once her lot is announced, she encourages the women to abandon their status of passive mourners and become promoters of peace. In a frantic dance she prophesies disaster for the Greeks. Eventually Cassandra makes an emotional appeal to the audience, asking them to recognize the pointlessness of war by accepting that it was caused only by the elite. The lesson for the Greeks and the audience to stay away from war appears clear with Cassandra's final revelation of a prophecy of harmony between nations:

A day will come when women will be stronger, and their voices heard, /
When men and women will know their world far better than now. / When
that time comes they must know themselves better too. Or these things
will happen again forever.¹¹⁷

The underlying lesson that Cassandra conveys through her words is that war hurts and dehumanizes both conquerors and conquered, but it can be prevented. Like Cassandra, and upon her input, the women are not passive mourners; they, too, collectively turn into teacher. They are then invited by Hecuba to sing to the audience so that they may hear them and learn from them. At the end, they all prepare to bury Astyanax: theirs is a gentle ceremony. As they scatter ornaments over the body of the child, the chorus is again invited by Hecuba to address the audience, with the hope that those things would be remembered and they would not die in vain. Differently from Euripides Hecuba and the chorus do not admit defeat silently. The queen herself directly challenges the audience to seek an end to war: "Are you ready?" she asks the audience. The singing chorus echoes her question, thus closing the play with a direct involvement of the audience: "Are you ready?" the chorus repeats for three times, to conclude with the further question, "Are you ready to understand?"¹¹⁸

117 Davis (2010–2011) 464.

118 Davis (2010–2011) 466.

This production featured dance for almost half of its running, and the main focus was on Cassandra, played by the choreographer Tamiri, whose dance had a reputation for addressing social injustice and political issues. Tamiri-Cassandra's dance embodied the fall of Troy and the effect of slavery on women. Her movements featured a 'macabre nuptial dance' which took place "among a sheaf of group abstractions like mad notes of music spinning across a page."¹¹⁹ The dance was overall judged too modernized and responding to the 'socialist agenda' of the project: the dancers "behaved more like 'Workers of the World-Unite!' than the Trojan women."¹²⁰ For all the political implications *Trojan Incident* did not have the chance to enjoy much success; it closed, indeed, after a month.

A full choreography recalling and adapting Euripides' *Trojan Women* through the medium of *Andromache's Farewell* by Samuel Barber discussed above, is to be found in the repertoire of a famous dancer whose choreographies were often inspired by ancient Greek myth: Martha Graham.¹²¹ Performed for the first time on June 23, 1982, at the New York City Center as a tribute to Samuel Barber, who passed away the year before, Graham's *Andromache's Lament* became one of the year's dance and theatre highlights. Taking place on the United Nations Day, and with many United Nations delegates in attendance, Graham, true to the original significance and spirit of the Greek play, dedicated the performance to World Peace, as specified in the program note. Built into a climax of distress and emotional force, the dance is essentially a soliloquy by Andromache upon one tragic event: "It is as if one came across an ancient tablet and deciphered only one episode in the history of the Trojan War." This 'one episode', as known, is the announcement to Andromache of Astyanax's fate and its execution. It was clearly meant to communicate an indictment of the horrors of war, against a background of combat symbolized in a series of hand-to-hand duels among members of the men's chorus. Graham achieved her objective by having the image of a child held aloft and lifeless reiterate, over and over, both the story of Andromache's personal tragedy and the universal one of all wars. The performance met with great success. "Magnificent theatre, emotional power, super art," are indeed the words that described the public and critics' reception of this dance at the time of its premiere.

119 Atkinson (1938) 15.

120 Atkinson (1938) 15.

121 Regarding the choreography discussed above see, in particular, Kisselgoff (1982). The quotations are from Kisselgoff.

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

If a particularly painful resonance has been discovered in Euripides' war plays, in this respect *Trojan Women* certainly stands out as the one more often re-proposed and re-adapted on stage in the last two centuries.¹²² After its revival on the verge of both World Wars in the first half of the 20th century, this tragedy has been used as indictment of the cruel nature of political war and of its terrible consequences for people all over the world, at times conveying even a delayed response to the horror of war.¹²³ Troy has become a 'common property', a metaphor for Hiroshima, Vietnam, the Balkans, Libya, Iraq, and more. In these adaptations the implied victims are often those targeted by U.S. bombs.¹²⁴ Whether in these new productions the focus is on the brutalization of women by war, or more broadly on the horrors and dehumanization of war affecting victors and vanquished alike, they all embody a spirit of protest and challenge—sometimes brutally—the audience with the responsibility of witnessing.

Such is the case of one of the first most compelling productions emerging during the Vietnam era, in the 1970s, and acclaimed as defining the theatrical events of the second half of the 20th century: *Fragments of a Greek Trilogy* by the Romanian theatre director Andrei Serban. *Trojan Women* constituted the third part of this play.¹²⁵ Staged for the opening of La MaMa Annex (New York City) in 1974, Serban's play takes on an *avant-garde* approach to the theatre, where the text is only the starting point for experimentation. Considering the spectators as actively engaged witnesses, applying *avant-garde* techniques, Serban aimed at establishing a direct communication between the actor, the spectator, and the spectacle without the conventional mediation of language, yet one which was effective in conveying essential messages at an emotional

122 Willis (2005) provides a quite extensive and detailed analysis of the production history of this play in the last two centuries, with a focus on Europe and some references to the United States. Willis is, in fact, the main source for my discussion and the organization of the material I present above. Willis' is an unpublished DPhil.Thesis, which can be freely downloaded from 'Oxford University Research Archive' website at <http://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:bb57e1d3-b560-45f2-8cd9-64befab97bba>. All references are to the text available on that website; I refer to the number of the pages as they appear in my printed copy of the downloaded text.

123 This applies to some adaptations that refer to the Holocaust: see below, pp. 80–4.

124 See Hall (2004) 19.

125 Willis (2005) 142–3. Useful observations on the entire *Trilogy* are also in Hartigan (1995) 45–6.

level rather than at an intellectual one. Suffering, pity, terror, raw human passion, brutalizing treatment of women, in a word, the horrors of war, are all retained from the original play, although the scenes have often only an approximate equivalent in Euripides' *Trojan Women*. The director reconstituted Euripides' text into a series of visual and aural episodes containing executions and sacrifices, thus conveying communal and individual suffering in a politically charged atmosphere. Believing in the primacy of emotion expressed through sound and action alone, Serban subjected his audience to a peculiar auditory experience, mixing different languages (Greek, Latin, African, Romanian, Aztec and pre-Columbian languages). The purpose was to promote an emotional response to the 'spectacle' of feelings and tensions, which no language could really express. Actors and spectators would find a special bond, since both would not always understand the languages used in the production. Such a bond was to be re-enforced by having the spectators engaged both in closely witnessing the action and its atrocities, and in being physically confronted with the issues raised by the play. This was particularly effective when it came to the issue of human responsibility with the scene of Helen. To have the audience engaged as witness and even physically challenged, by exploiting the unconventional theatrical space of La MaMa Annex,¹²⁶ Serban had the spectators personally led by the actors from the lobby to their seat. From their seat, still guided by the actors, they followed the action by moving to different parts of the venue. Staging the scene in multiple locations and at multiple levels, Serban could create a 'surround-experience' for the audience, to the point that the spectators found themselves physically in the midst of the destruction of Troy, thus fully involved in the various rituals and acts of violence on stage. Despite the approximate degree of correspondence with Euripides' text, the main episodes were preserved. For instance, Cassandra appeared in her bacchic-mad dance, and Astyanax was brutally murdered. But each episode also presented innovative features which were meant to convey politically and socially charged messages. And the purpose was to promote, once again, the audience's responses. Cassandra, for example, played by an African-American actress, was presented as a shaman-like character with a hangman's noose hung around her neck. After collapsing at the end of her ecstatic dance, she was dragged, through the hangman's rope, by a soldier on a higher platform, where they were both pulled back and forth on the rope. This representation of Cassandra was meant to remind the audience of the brutal lynching of African slaves, which was a central issue in the protests of the

126 For a complete analysis see Willis (2005) 147–59; also Goff (2009) 87–9.

Civil Rights movement.¹²⁷ Serban's rendition of Helen episode was perhaps the most suggestive, and most disturbing, use of spectacle for veiled political purposes. Dismissing Euripides' confrontation between Hecuba and Helen, and dissolving all the ambiguities of what would happen to Helen once she leaves the stage, Serban replaced the arguments between the two women with brutal images of Helen's punishment. Enacting Menelaus' final judgment of Helen (*Trojan Women* 1039–41), the Trojan women stoned her while she is dragged chained in a cage to the center of the place, passing through the audience. The women threw rocks and other objects at her, while spitting. They also stripped her naked and scrubbed her. After that, a man in a bear costume was led into the cage to sexually abuse and rape her. After this violation, she is tied to a pillar; only in this submissive, vulnerable status is she finally confronted and interrogated by Hecuba. The communal act of stoning was meant to be a purgative/cathartic ritual for the Trojan women. Their indulgence in the violence was meant to brutally show the treatment of Helen also as a victim, as a scapegoat that must be eliminated so that the community might heal itself. In particular with this scene, the director intended to suggest the need that mankind has to hold someone responsible for the state of the world, whether it is poverty, political assassinations, war, etc. In this way Serban intended to challenge the audience on the issue of responsibility, true to the significance of Helen's episode in Euripides.

The issue of social responsibility is crucial to another production of the early 70s, which also uses *avant-garde* techniques, relying on a visual and aural rendition of the Greek play: *Toroio no Onna* ("Women of Troy") by the Japanese theatre director Tadashi Suzuki.¹²⁸ First performed in Tokyo in 1974, then undertaking an international tour, it landed on the American stage in 1982, at the Japanese Society in New York City. Set in a bombed Japanese cemetery after the Second World War, reflecting the ordeals of a specific population in a contemporary post-war environment, this production should be seen within the process both of coming to term with communal guilt and the

127 Among other innovative components, I find peculiarly significant Andromache's suicide, which is represented on the stage: the woman "with a stabbing motion makes a suicide jump off the upper level [of the stage place]." Willis (2005) 151. It is a very effective stage action: the daring jump is meant to visually and practically express Andromache's desperation and hopelessness while having, at the same time, a shocking impact on the audience. I also wonder whether Andromache's way of committing suicide was chosen as to recall and echo the crucial event which caused such a desperate act: the brutal murder of Astyanax, killed by being thrown off (i.e., in a way, forced to jump from) the citadel's tower.

128 The main sources for my discussion about Suzuki's play are Willis (2005) 161–78; Goff (2009) 89–91.

humiliation of defeat, and of coping with the loss of human life after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It might be also seen as a case of delayed response to the atrocities of a specific war. The director, however, chose exactly this Euripidean tragedy for universal reasons. His declared intention was “to express the disastrous fate of women caused by war, which was initiated by men, and the complete powerlessness of religion to aid the women or the war itself.”¹²⁹ The sufferings of war, above all on the female side, the issue of responsibility (a war initiated by men) and the religious crisis (indifference / failure of gods) are all among the core ingredients of the Greek model, which Suzuki originally re-proposed to warn against the constant threat of war and to denounce the brutalization of men against women. All was presented as the story of shell-shocked Old Man (in the first version) and Old Woman (in the second version, first produced in Paris, 1977), who sought purgation through a fantasy experience of the Trojan myth. Some of the original characters were retained and mixed with stock characters from the Japanese theatrical canon. The new character of the Old Woman stood for Hecuba and Cassandra; the Buddhist god, Jizo, replaced the Olympian gods, and Samurai replaced the Greek soldiers. Andromache, Astyanax, and Menelaus were preserved, while Helen disappeared. The main mark of the Olympian substitute, i.e., Jizo, is indifference. Indeed, his standing motionless in the center of the stage for all the duration of the play¹³⁰ represented a visual comment on the place of religion in contemporary Japanese society: it showed its failure in helping the victims of war. The brutality and desolation of war were explored through a series of onstage ritualized violence. Andromache, who appeared grasping a rag-doll representing Astyanax, was atrociously brutalized by the Samurai bandits who grabbed her, threw her on the ground, stripped away her clothes and, laughing, raped her. After that, a Samurai took away Astyanax (i.e., the rag-doll) from his mother and flung him on the floor. A woman of the chorus picked up the body and tried to escape, only to be caught by another Samurai, who stabbed her in the leg and cut off the arm of the child. The other women reacted by crying aloud against the Samurai, who laughed and mocked at them. After the women's lament over Astyanax, Menelaus entered. Helen, as mentioned, never appeared; she is only named. Her elimination was functional to the emphasis on the issue of responsibility and reinforced Suzuki's main theme: men are the

129 Willis (2005) 166 and n. 66.

130 Perhaps the moment that best represents the indifference and apathetic behavior of this god is when he did not move a finger even at the sight of Astyanax murdered before his eyes. Yet Jizo—as god patron of the children—should have protected him: Willis (2005) 12; 179. This would be another very effective way to realize on the stage Suzuki's intention to show the powerlessness of religion before the horrors of war.

solely responsible for war. To the mere mention of Helen's name, Menelaus reacted savagely, killing everyone onstage. The play ended with the return of Andromache to the stage with flowers for Astyanax's funeral. Before this act and for only one time (this time), Jizo finally moved.

Similarly to the case of Suzuki's production, and specifically in the 1980s, productions of *Trojan Women* became a vehicle of delayed reactions to war and its atrocities, namely to the Second World War, above all in terms of response to the Holocaust. This delay might be due to the fact that it was so painful to remember that people initially preferred to repress any memory of it.¹³¹ Only about forty years after the event, people of the country most directly affected by the Holocaust started to confront the facts of Hitler's atrocious actions. There is a peculiar theme of Euripides' play that has often been overlooked in favor of the hopelessness and annihilation-motif. It is a theme which to me is peculiarly proper to an adaptation in terms of a response to such a shocking war experience as the Holocaust. It is the theme of remembrance,¹³² which is evoked by the chorus of the women when, at the end of the tragedy, they express concern for the fate of Troy rather than for their new life as slaves. The name of Troy will disappear; the city collapses and is no more. Who will remember Troy? (cf., e.g., *Trojan Women* 1291–2, 1298, 1319, 1322). Contrary to the chorus, Hecuba is confident that their experience and the fall of Troy itself will be material for poetry to come. The fear of oblivion and the justice of remembrance characterize the experience of war survivors and are associated with the effort to rebuild individual lives as well as entire nations, to recreate personal and national identities, and to come to terms with the psychological effects of being a victim. These are the struggles dealing with the issue of remembrance, and this kind of struggles can be identified in the worldwide response to the Holocaust. The issue of national identity in relation to the struggle either of remembering or, on the contrary, of minimizing the Holocaust deeply affected the post-war era of a divided Germany. For a while, that experience was a taboo subject for both Jews and non-Jews. Non-Jews strove to distance themselves from the Nazi regime, while dealing with the sense of guilt imposed by Israel, and, at the same time, coping with their own loss. In terms of literary responses, in the two Germanys artists and writers attempted to express sorrow over the sufferings of all of Europe. On the other hand, Jewish artists, above all theatre artists, relying on the motif of national-collective guilt, were not missing any occasion to remind German audiences of their responsibility. Yet there was one writer who aimed for a different response: the Hungarian-born Jewish director George Tabori. Tabori intended to make the theatrical event a form of remembering

131 Willis (2005) 183.

132 See Conacher (1967) 145.

through a deep understanding of the Holocaust, with a possibly positive final result, i.e., a sort of reconciliation, despite the unbearable facts.¹³³ These intentions informed the two experimental productions of *Die Troerinnen* ("The Trojan Women," 1976, 1985). Re-enacting disturbing scenes of the Holocaust horror, Tabori wanted to provide a work that could help the spectator have a better "grasp" of the Holocaust and a new understanding about the strength of the human spirit in coping with adversity. Tabori's first production began with a wordless twenty-minute prelude meant to *visually* emphasize both the brutalization of war victims and their sufferings from extreme forms of human cruelty similar to those perpetrated during the Holocaust. Using the ancient text as a filter of his own response to the Holocaust,¹³⁴ and making explicit references to those shocking horrors, Tabori intended to perpetuate the memory of his own family and all who died in the concentration camps. By this way, at the same time, he intended to confront the history of Jewish suffering and the systematic massacre of the European Jews during the war. As far as the explicit, historical references are concerned, the soldiers, who brutally handled the women after the text-less prelude, were dressed in the camouflage uniforms of German paratroopers. The head-shaving and the soldiers forcing their victims to open their mouths to look for gold fillings clearly recalled scenes from the Holocaust. The onstage death of Astyanax was a vivid portrayal of a specific style of killing which might have occurred in a Nazi concentration camp. Two well-dressed officials entered the stage and washed their hands with such a precision that it might recall doctors about to perform a surgery. Approaching the child from behind on tiptoes, the two officials rapidly tied a table cloth over his head and strangled him.¹³⁵ A significant addition that, by way of irony, appears suitable for this Holocaust play into which Euripides' tragedy is turned, was the "Farewell-Dinner" hosted by Menelaus, a war-torn version of the Greek character. The act of communal dining is, in fact, a significant feature of Jewish life. In the play, this act would obviously refer to Christ's Last Supper, and it ended up being an unusual kind of torture. At this dinner, in fact, Menelaus struck one woman on the head, fed another tiny bites of food, forced Cassandra to eat a large meal, and violently pressed the head of Andromache into her plate full of food and cruelly held her there. The end of the play poignantly re-evoked the issue of remembrance: Hecuba became possessed by, and spoke on behalf of, a spirit. It was the spirit of a woman who lost four sons in war and finally

133 See, e.g., Feinberg (1998) 267–80; (1999).

134 Tabori lost most of his family in Auschwitz: Willis (2005) 192–3.

135 The method used to kill the child is sinisterly foreshadowed by a previous scene where Helen, presented as both a decorative character and yet a victim, is strangled by Menelaus at the "Farewell Dinner": Willis (2005) 199.

discovered that the youngest, too, had been murdered. This scene has been seen as, and was meant to be, a unique example of a way in which those from the past can facilitate and inspire 'remembrance'.

This first production of Tabori's *Die Troerinnen* was not well received, for it offended the sensibility of West Germans, who were dealing with feelings of guilt. The second production (1985) was less shocking and was characterized by a more universal appeal. Tabori, in fact, framed images and references to the Holocaust into a more universal context, which reflected other contemporary concerns, including reactions to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and thus the fear of nuclear threat.¹³⁶ This second production was based on an adaptation of the Euripides' play written by Walter Jens, a German professor of Rhetoric and Classical Philology at Tübingen. Its title, *Der Untergang: Nach den Troerinnen des Euripides* (= "The downfall: A version of Euripides' *Trojan Women*") reflects the new interpretation, suggesting an intention to parallel the fall of Troy with the potential downfall of modern society in a nuclear annihilation. Within this more universal approach, there is a significant shift in emphasis from the soldiers' abuse of women to activist women who eventually choose to take their lives into their own hands. This is, perhaps, the most important change. Adopting a feminist agenda, women were given some agency: from mourning, they indeed switched to rebellion.¹³⁷

Euripides' *Trojan Women* was somewhat controversial and provocative among Jewish audiences, above all in the most famous production that occurred in Israel, Tel Aviv's Habimah National Theatre in 1983, by the guest director Holk Freytag. This production was based on Eli Malka's Hebrew translation of Sartre's *Les Troyennes*.¹³⁸ It was produced in the wake of the 1982 Lebanon War, which marked the first time when Israel acted as an aggressor, rather than as a defender of its own territory. It focuses on the ambivalent status of being a victim (the traditional view of Jews) that turns into victimizer,

136 As noted by Willis (2005) 207–10, this second production occurred just a month later the Geneva Summit (November 1985), the first one where the U.S. and the Soviet Union started a dialogue to peacefully end the Cold War. And one of the most compelling issues of the summit was perhaps the fear of nuclear warfare.

137 The fear of a potential nuclear warfare, along with the response to the atrocities of the Holocaust, characterized also the production of East German director Christoph Schroth *Antike Entdeckungen 5* (= "Discoveries of Antiquity 5") 1982. Consisting of a mix of tragedies and a comedy, the Trojan War was used as a starting point for discussion of contemporary war-related issues, such as armament, nuclear testing, and the desire for peace. For a detailed analysis with also a reference to the influence on this production by Christa Wolf's *Kassandra*, see Willis (2005) 215–27 (also, above, p. 63 and n. 75).

138 Willis (2005) 228–44.

namely of the Palestinians, thus reflecting the current national identity crisis.¹³⁹ The exploration of the victor-victim relationship in Euripides' *Trojan Women* provided a suitable forum for a debate over the current crisis. The ambivalence 'victim-victimizer' was made explicit by drawing a parallel between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), with their brutal behavior, and the Nazis. The Trojan War turned into a stage metaphor for Israel's questionable conquest and occupation of Lebanon territory. The Greek warriors turned into the Israel Defense Forces' soldiers whose extermination of the 'enemy' and brutal treatment of the women evoked an analogy with the Nazis.¹⁴⁰ True to the original Greek play, the issue of responsibility provided another central theme capable of reflecting both the current division of Israel between the religious and secular factions, and the struggle of Jewish people who were questioning why God did not save them from the Holocaust.¹⁴¹ Freytag could realize this by replacing Euripides' prologue with a twelve-minute non-verbal opening sequence where soldiers brutally pushed refugee women carrying bundles onto a desolate set, which recalled contemporary refugee camp. Here they erected the tents while fighting each other for any available piece of cloth. By eliminating the gods of Euripides' opening scene, Freytag intended to indicate that cycles of violence and bloodshed were controlled by men, not by higher beings. Without the agency of gods, the fate of human beings is a matter of responsibility of human beings themselves, above all of those who go to war. The absence of the gods was also meant to suggest a kind of acknowledgement of Israeli secular factions which supported a *legal* (rather than religion-based) return of the Jews to the land that they believed was promised to them by God. This return was to be legal in that it would have been defined through international politics. This idea was in contrast with the religious factions for whom only God could control the Jewish fate. To convey these meanings Freytag exploited a theatrical technique typical to Israeli theatrical tradition, i.e., the *aktualität* ("actual/plain reality"). As the term itself suggests, it consists of recreating the reality itself rather than making a production relevant through the reference to actual events. Set, costume, sound and body language were the main elements that Freytag used to achieve this effect.¹⁴²

139 Significantly the subtitle of one of the scholarly works concerning this production is, in fact, *In Search of Identity*: Rozik-Rosen (1998).

140 Regarding the analogy, see also Rozik-Rosen (2008) 222–37.

141 In Freytag's production it is Hecuba, in particular, who becomes the symbol of the Jews' questioning the responsibility of God to save his people: Willis (2005) 232–3.

142 For a detailed description of set, costumes, sounds, and body language, see Rozik-Rosen (1998) esp. 164–7; Willis (2005) 231, 234.

A contrast to this Israeli theatrical tradition of *aktualität* is the production *The Hopeless Women of Troy* by the Israeli dramatist and theatre director Hanoeh Levin. It was performed in 1984, at Tel Aviv's Cameri Theater. Levin re-proposed Euripides' play in terms of a universal truth: the meaninglessness of human suffering as a result of war. He focused on the dehumanization of the Trojan women as an effect of the abuse they had suffered. Avoiding any allusion to the current Lebanon War, Levin rather emphasized the gender issue, recreating Euripides' play as a modern battle of the sexes, where women are victims of male supremacy. Cassandra, for instance, appeared as a sexual object publicly humiliated in a demonstration of male supremacy. Polyxena appeared executed in an act of cannibalistic-erotic-orgy. She thus became another example of the brutalization of the women, while men, compelled by war-emotion, turned into beasts and, exploiting their supremacy, indulged in sexual abuse and perversion.¹⁴³ To sharpen the emotional tension between the sexes, Levin recreated the sacrifice of Astyanax through the poignant image of the sacrificial lamb. In this version, Agamemnon snatched the child from Andromache's arms and held him over his shoulder exactly as an animal brought to the slaughter. Clearly evoking the biblical story of Isaac, the scene emphasized the innocence and hopelessness of the child, and thus of all children, innocent victims of war. As the title suggested, hopelessness was the real theme. Levin's production seems to suggest that the victims and losers in war will always be women who can do little, if anything, to protect themselves. The violence by which he represented this theme shocked and confused the spectators. Levin seemed to present violence for violence's sake, thus preventing the spectators from clearly seeing his message. Levin failed to re-propose the modern elements of psychological abuse and sexual politics—motifs somewhat embedded in the ancient texts—in a way that could help his audience come to terms with similar challenges in their own lives.

Another version or, more precisely, translation of Euripides' *Trojan Women* that promotes the empowerment of the female while denouncing the oppression of women by men is *The Trojan Women* by the Irish novelist and poet Brendan Kennelly. It was first published and staged in Dublin (Peacock Theatre) in 1993.¹⁴⁴ This Euripidean tragedy *per se* stands out as a play peculiarly relevant to the Irish history of injustice and oppression against women. Kennelly's version exploited this particular relevance by transforming the tragedy into a

143 The presence of Polyxena might be due to an influence from Seneca: Willis (2005) 250.

144 According to Goff (2009) 104, Kennelly's version should be seen more as a translation than a full-scale adaption. About this play, see Willis (2005) 264–71; McDonald (2005) 132–5; and Goff (2009) 104–9.

“feminist declaration of independence”,¹⁴⁵ and making it an anti-male rather than an anti-war play.¹⁴⁶ War is more sexualized than in other versions¹⁴⁷ and becomes rather a means to emphasize the female-male conflict. In this perspective the motif of rape achieves special resonance, considering its prominence in contemporary warfare as a male-organized weapon of subjection and revenge.¹⁴⁸ Refashioning the ancient characters, Kennelly turned them into modern-day models of stoic strength and angry resistance. The female power of endurance and survival is highlighted: Kennelly’s Trojan women are not mourning victims and they are not passive. Indeed, “Women will rule the world,”¹⁴⁹ says Poseidon as he opens the play. The production choice for the premiere, by the director Lynne Parker, was, however, almost in contrast with this feministic overtone, for his intention was to make the women representative of the corrupt society that Ireland had become.¹⁵⁰ Parker in fact took creative license with Kennelly’s text and stage direction. He turned the ‘battlefield after a battle’, which should have been the original set, into a “sophisticated post-party” or “morning-after-the night-before in the jazz club at the end of the universe”¹⁵¹ with the women being “decorative objects” of a corrupt society. Parker’s unusual interpretation of Kennelly’s play was generally unappreciated. Subsequent productions of Kennelly’s text, true to the author’s intentions, were more consistent with its feminist, anti-male connotations.

The more traditionally recognized ‘anti-war’ connotation of this Euripidean tragedy characterizes the singular adaptation by the American historian-turned-into-a-playwright Charles Mee, entitled *Trojan Women 2.0: A Love Story*. It was staged for the first time in 1995, and enjoyed several subsequent revivals.¹⁵²

145 Willis (2005) 267 and n. 32.

146 See O’Rawe 1999.

147 As noted by McDonald (2005) 134–5.

148 Although this ‘phenomenon’ became clear during the Balkan war in the 1990s, it has recently been discovered that organized rapes were a feature of the Second World War, too: Goff (2009) 149 n. 62.

149 Kennelly (2006) 141.

150 Willis (2005) 270 and n. 46.

151 Willis (2005) 268–9.

152 The first performance in 1995 was presented by the ART Institute for Advanced Theatre (Harvard – Boston); other significant productions are listed in Willis (2005) 294 n. 107. About this play, see Willis (2005) 293–7; Goff (2009) 109–15. Bryant-Bertail (2000) provides an attentive and very interesting discussion of one of the most significant productions of this play, which occurred at the University of Washington in Seattle in the spring 1996. For a full analysis, see Hartigan (2011) 89–98; Lauriola (2015-forthcoming). Mee’s text is available on his website at <http://www.charlesmee.org/html/trojan.html>. On Mee’s (*Re*) *Making of Greek Drama* Project, more recently Mee (2015).

Most directly related to the war atrocities, at that time, occurring in Serbia, Mee's adaptation is a pastiche fully devoted to an anti-war polemic. This play consists of a combination of post-modern performance art with a mixture of ancient texts (besides *Trojan Women*, also *Hecuba* and some portions of Virgil's *Aeneid*) and modern texts (in particular, Berlioz's *Les Troyens*), media reporting, and testimonies from survivors of Hiroshima, of the Holocaust, and of the more contemporary war in the former Yugoslavia. It mainly focuses on the brutality of men, and male warfare, against women. "This is how men are" is indeed how the two new characters, i.e., Special Forces soldiers Bill and Ray Bob, cynically comment on the situation when recounting the atrocities (Mee, *Trojan Women 2.0: A Love story* 7, 10).¹⁵³ Structurally, Mee's play is in two acts: the first ("The Prologue") is an adaptation of Euripides' play, set in the aftermath of a city's downfall; the second ("The Play") is drawn from Berlioz's opera, for it features the story of Dido and Aeneas in a similar way, although set differently, i.e., in a disused spa-resort, and presenting an open-ended conclusion: Aeneas would be either killed by Dido, upon her learning that Aeneas plans to leave and follow his destiny, or would survive to Dido's attempt, leave and thus land in Italy.¹⁵⁴ One of the most innovative characterizations is that of Hecuba. Wishing to manage the pain by maintaining some civilized standards, she refused revenge until the very end. Even in the scene with Helen, with the chorus urging revenge, Hecuba stayed calm and prevented the chorus from taking action. Only after the killing of Polyxena, when her body is brought on the stage for Hecuba to prepare the funeral, did Hecuba yield to revenge, turning into a man, i.e., appropriating a position and a status that she has been repudiating so far and that belongs to men: brutal violence. Mee's adaptation was revived several times around the turn of the century, above all when new wars and new forms of violence have occurred. Each revival has featured innovations in terms of setting, costume, and music. Mee himself has actually left directional decisions open. The varied, eclectic production decisions have been perceived at the same time as comforting and alienating, and the chaotic style of the revivals has made the play difficult to follow. Nonetheless the audiences responded enthusiastically and remained engaged through their attempt to grasp and identify the numerous contemporary references.

Undoubtedly, from the 1990s up to the first decade of our century there has been a tidal wave of conflicts around the world. They have often resulted

153 The quotations are taken from Goff, who, in turn, quoted from her printed copy of Mee's text available at the website mentioned above (n. 152). I should specify that the very first time the line "This is how men are" is performed is, almost at the beginning, by a member of the chorus, Eisa, after Hecuba's list of cruel actions perpetrated by the enemy.

154 Hartigan (2011) 97–8.

in genocide and often initiated refugee crises and unbearable violations of human rights, despite the lesson of the World Wars and the Geneva accords. These conflicts include the ones occurring in the former Yugoslavia with all the massacres that took place throughout (1991–1999), Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War (1990–1991), the civil war and genocide in Rwanda (1990–1994), and the Chechnyan wars (1994–2009). The new forms of violence began to exert pressure on both politics and literature. With the high proportion of casualties being local civilians, and stories of rape and wild atrocities becoming everyday, ordinary stories, not surprisingly productions of Euripides' *Trojan Women* and its adaptations have become a suitable vehicle for raising awareness of human rights' violations and for promoting reactions.¹⁵⁵ Among several, a mention should be reserved for the version by the American playwright and actress Ellen McLaughlin, most known for a later production of *The Persians* (2003), written and staged as a response to the American invasion of Iraq in March 2003.¹⁵⁶ McLaughlin's version of *Trojan Women*, first staged in New York in 1996, marked an important turn in the performance history of this tragedy, for it was acted entirely by amateurs who were refugees from the former Yugoslavia. The women came from different sides of the conflict, all victims of men who were fighting each other. McLaughlin was sensitive enough to avoid having actors play the role of the 'enemy'. To this end, she also cut from her version the roles of Helen and Menelaus. The play was often delivered simultaneously in Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, and English, and the roles were shared among two or more actors, to emphasize the share of the atrocities of war independently from their different ethnic origin.¹⁵⁷

References to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, namely to Kosovo's crisis, can also be found, though not overtly, in the austere production of the American writer and director Joanne Akalaitis, at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington D.C., in March 1999. The premiere occurred in the same month as NATO strikes started in Kosovo; the audience was thus aware of the potential parallel of the themes of the play with Kosovo's crisis, despite the presence of more overt references to the Holocaust.¹⁵⁸

155 I should note that a concise list of the several productions enhanced by, and referring to, the above-mentioned tidal wave of conflict is in Goff (2009) 105–6. A brief discussion specifically of productions after September 11, 2001 is in Willis (2005) 298–304.

156 For a detailed description of this production, see also Goff (2009) 116–22.

157 This version was revived some years later, precisely in 2003, with some slight, yet important, differences, such as the re-introduction of the Helen-Menelaus scene. In 2008 it was again revived in California, where it achieved great critical acclaim. In this 2008 production, although McLaughlin avoided any overt reference to the U.S. wars in the Middle East, connections to Iraq were easily identified: Goff (2009) 117 and n. 78.

158 For further details, see Joseph (1999); Willis (2005) 285–9.

In the first decades of the 21st century, as could be expected, professional and amateur productions have been set in Muslim culture and have been including references, whether overt or not, to the war and ensuing violence in Iraq.¹⁵⁹ Among several works, mention should be done of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu. An African Re-reading of Euripides' Trojan Women for the Chipping Norton Theatre* (UK), staged at the theatre mentioned in the subtitle in 2004. Brilliantly blending ancient Greece, 19th-century Yorubaland,¹⁶⁰ and the contemporary European/American world, especially their involvement in the current wars in the Middle East, this Nigerian play is topical and relevant for all: for the British audiences, for which Osofisan accepted the commission, for his own African audiences, and more broadly for Europeans and Americans, despite the African setting and the presence of African elements unfamiliar to worldwide audiences.¹⁶¹ Paralleling and juxtaposing references to the Yoruba city Owu, in turn an African Troy, and references to contemporary Iraq,¹⁶² Osofisan has adequately exploited the 'universality' of Greek tragedy, making Euripides' *Trojan Women* a play about the consequences of military aggression *any time* and *anywhere*: in 19th- and 20th-century Africa, in the Middle East, in Bosnia, Rwanda etc.¹⁶³ The play is set outside a burning city, Owu, which, like ancient Troy, has been destroyed after a siege of many years: all the men have been killed and all the women enslaved. The plot structure is almost the same as the original, and so is each character. There is little action, since the play focuses on the group of women lamenting their fate. The brutal taking away of a child, from the arms of one of the women, and the killing

159 See Goff (2009) 116. As for the recent wars in Iraq, a noteworthy response is that of the English theatre director Katie Mitchell, who staged *Trojan Women* at the National Theatre in London, in 2008. Her declared intention was to re-sensitize the audience to atrocities in contemporary 'distant' wars, such as the war in Iraq, which was not peculiarly affecting, in the end, her British world (and in this sense, it was a 'distant' war). Her production aimed at making violence as manifest as possible in order to awaken the contemporary audience from its lethargy by shocking it. Valuable observations on this production are in Christianaki (2010).

160 Yorubaland or 'people of Yoruba' refers to a 'cultural' rather than a strictly geographic notion; it refers to a population in West Africa, mostly located in Nigeria.

161 See Budelmann (2007) for a profound analysis of this play, with a special attention to the way in which different audiences might respond to the blend of traditions and environments mentioned above. My observations are drawn on this work and on Goff (2009) 122–35, who also provides a detailed summary of the plot.

162 As Goff remarks (2009) 122, Osofisan's note about its genesis ties the play to its first production in "the season of Iraqi war."

163 Budelmann (2007) 19.

of that child marks the emotional highpoint. While referring to the real history of 19th century-Owu's war, the author gave that war present-day resonances. For instance, the besieging army is intentionally called "Allied forces", as was the US-led coalition, which included the UK, that invaded Iraq in 2003 to depose Saddam Hussein. Perhaps more significantly, the "Allied forces" claim to have come to liberate Owu. This was not only an overt reference to Bush's label of the invasion of Iraq as 'Operation Iraqi Freedom.' It was also an incisive comment on the hypocrisy of official discourse that, in the historical Iraqi context, tended to cover up the economic motivations for invading Iraq. In Osofisan's play, it is the women who, showing a subtle political awareness, repeatedly scorned the claim of the Allied Forces. "Nowadays, when the strong fight the weak, it's called a Liberation War . . ." say the women, commenting on their defeat.¹⁶⁴ The effects of the horror and brutality of war on the women, the ones who are left to face its consequences, their resilience and resistance are other important motifs through which Osofisan has made the play relevant to today's Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. "Euripides must have chosen to concentrate on these victims [sc. women] in order to further highlight the horror and brutality of war. A message which is particularly pertinent today, with Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, etc," as Osofisan put it.¹⁶⁵ His remains, in the very end, a tale of women as spoils. Throughout his blending of different timelines and geographic areas, while the various contexts resonate differently for different audiences, his picture of suffering as a condition that transcends those differences is meant to evoke a common humanity. Osofisan's play was well received. It was staged one more time, obtaining considerable critical acclaim, before being published in 2006.

Screen

This tragedy has not been seen—so it seems—as particularly appealing by film directors. There is one monumental cinematic rendition of *Trojan Women* by the Greek director Michael Cacoyannis, made a few decades ago, in 1971.¹⁶⁶ Cacoyannis himself wrote the English screenplay, based on Edith

¹⁶⁴ Osofisan (2006) 8.

¹⁶⁵ Budelmann (2007) 22 and n. 10.

¹⁶⁶ Before engaging in the cinematic version, Cacoyannis directed two stage productions of this tragedy: in 1963, at the Circle-in-the-Square Theater in New York City (staging the text of E. Hamilton's translation), and in 1965, at the Théâtre du Palais de Chaillot, in Paris (staging *Les Troyennes* of Jean Paul Sartre). A detailed account of these two productions is in Willis (2005) 95–122. As far as the movie is concerned, for a full-scale examination, see McDonald (1983) 193–258. Cf. also Willis (2005) 122–39; Goff (2009) 85–7. My discussion

Hamilton's translation (1937).¹⁶⁷ His *Trojan Women* was the second of his three cinematic homages to Euripides, the other two being *Electra* (1962) and *Iphigenia* (1977), both in Greek.¹⁶⁸ Produced at the height of the Vietnam War, for some critics Cacoyannis' film is a reaction to the U.S. atrocities at My Lai (South Vietnam, 1968).¹⁶⁹ It is, however, significant, and must be taken into account, that Cacoyannis worked on, and produced, this film while he was exiled by the military dictatorship (the Greek Junta, 1967–1974) then ruling Greece.¹⁷⁰ The title card with which Cacoyannis began his film clearly stated that the Melian massacre prompted Euripides to write this tragedy as a “timeless indictment of the horror and futility of all wars.” On the other hand, the director's Notes accompanying the film referred to the “cry against oppression in any shape, place, or form” which has found its release through Euripides' tragedy.¹⁷¹ Oppression rather than an anti-war message seems indeed to be the main focus of Cacoyannis' film version of *Trojan Women*. This is made explicit by the dedication at the end of the film: “We who have made this film dedicate it to all those who fearlessly oppose the oppression of man by man.”¹⁷² In Euripides women often raise their voice against oppression.¹⁷³ Exploiting this feature, Cacoyannis' film accordingly offers throughout a picture of women resisting their captors in spirit of protest, while conveying a major condemnation of war as seen through their sufferings. To explore the theme of oppression and emphasize the fighting spirit of the women, since the beginning Cacoyannis stressed the brutality of the soldiers.¹⁷⁴ At the beginning, a ‘voice-over’, i.e., a narrator's voice, replaces Euripides' gods of the prologue; this ‘voice’ thus provides the necessary background information,¹⁷⁵ while the

is mainly drawn on these three sources but is not meant to provide as full an analysis as McDonald and Willis do, due to the scope of this volume, and to the limited room for this section.

167 Suter (2014) 482.

168 These three movies are known as Cacoyannis' Euripidean trilogy: see Mackinnon (1986) 74–94.

169 Suter (2014) 482. Cf. also Mackinnon (1986) 80–1 for a discussion of the political context.

170 See, e.g., Van Steen (2001). It was indeed released a few years after Costa Gavras' *Z* (1969)—an indictment of the Greek Junta—and just after a 1970 wave of major war-centered films: Vivante (2013) 29.

171 Willis (2005) 124 and n. 81.

172 McDonald (1983) 244; Willis (2005) 123.

173 See Winkler (1991) 160, 162.

174 McDonald (1983) 245; 247.

175 Regarding this voice, see McDonald (1983) 194–5.

camera shows the desolation of Troy.¹⁷⁶ The Greek soldiers are seen leading the female captives through the ruins, and, suddenly, brutally stripping the children from their mothers who desperately scream after their loss. Since the film medium allowed the use of a larger number of women and children than a stage production does, the resistance to, and the clash with, the soldiers appeared extremely and vividly severe, as the viewers witnessed a few soldiers cruelly pushing around a large crowd of defenseless women. In protest and resistance, Hecuba first sets an example: differently than in Euripides, as soon as she receives the news that Odysseus will be her master, Hecuba reacts violently and seeks the women's help. These women, in fact, take on her defense, shouting at the guards and moving against them as a mob of protestors. The guards, in turn, react by advancing toward the women and intimidating them with their spears. They surround the women as if to corral animals into submission. Rare in Euripides are the references to the maltreatment of women by Greek soldiers, and even more rare are the indications of some sort of resistance by the women. Where, indeed, we do find some references in Euripides, the text is not clear about to which extent violence is used to 'tame' the women: such is the case of Helen dragged out of her tent by the soldiers (Euripides, *Trojan Women* 880–1), and of Hecuba restrained as she attempts to run into the burning ruins (Euripides, *Trojan Women* 1282–3). The film innovatively sharpens the brutish attitudes of the soldiers. As a result, the women's valiantly endurance and resistance against oppression are stressed. Even Andromache is portrayed as more resistant. The added scene showing her at the tomb of Achilles—a visual re-elaboration of the Polyxena's death-motif which is conveyed by Andromache in Euripides' play (ll. 620–30)—is perhaps one of the most indicative of Cacoyannis' added nuances to Andromache's character. In this scene, being forced to bend into the shape of a bow before the tomb, Andromache discovers Polyxena's body. Defying the guard, Andromache put her own mantle over the girl's corpse and then proudly walks back to the cart carrying Hector's armor and her son. As a dignified heroine with impassive face and strong look, though her eyes are communicating anguish, Andromache reacts to the news that Astyanax must die. In her last shot, after the scene of her son thrown off Troy's battlements, she looks defeated but is still standing. She stands before the atrocities that she has just witnessed, looking back at Troy with resigned dignity and sorrow, while her ship is departing. Perhaps the most masterfully presented and re-proposed character is that of Helen.

176 Troy was created from a dusty, rocky ruin located in a small village, Atienza, in Spain. To Cacoyannis this village seemed to be ideal for satisfying his concern with timelessness; for him Atienza, in fact, was an adequate location that "could not be pinned down to any definite age." Willis (2005) 127–8 and n. 93.

More than he does with any other characters, Cacoyannis exploits the use of the camera to focus on the body and eyes of Helen. Focusing on Hecuba's advice to Menelaus to avoid looking at Helen, for she 'entraps' the eyes of men (*Trojan Women* 890–1), Cacoyannis explores the danger of gazing upon her. The camera shots of Helen's face and body are in fact predominant in her scene, in the added scene in the prologue, and finally in the scene with Menelaus, drawn on Euripides' episode.¹⁷⁷ In both Euripides and Cacoyannis the power that Helen's gaze entails is one that no man can escape. Emphasizing this power, Cacoyannis turns Helen into a character that confidently knows how to use her female eroticism, deploying it at every moment on the screen. The danger that the power of her gaze poses consists of emasculating men. Far from being the expected passive object of the male gaze, Helen is thus transformed into an active gazer who is able to unambiguously express her dominance in a way that one would expect from men. This transformation is in accordance with the fighting spirit of the women and their active response against male oppression which the director has intended to point out throughout the film. Here Helen is meant to use her beauty not just to win a man as women were expected to do, but also to convey a socio-political challenge. Frustrating the social expectation of the function of female beauty and sensual appeal, Helen uses those qualities to promote a different notion of female identity. Far from being a beautifully sexed pawn in the schemes of others, Helen's self-empowering use and control of her beauty serves as a dynamic voice for female political resistance. Dissolving the ambiguity of Euripides' text, Cacoyannis' Helen, who with her gaze can dismantle Menelaus, will unambiguously reach home alive, survive, and keep her royal position.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Trojan Women*

As it has been noted above, this tragedy as a whole has not enjoyed a broad reception until the 20th century, when the anti-war message has become peculiarly relevant, along with an awakened sensitivity to the defenceless civilian victims of war, i.e., women and children. As a result, the studies on the reception of this tragedy as a whole are not as many as for some other Euripidean plays.

A broad, yet good, section on the afterlife of this play is provided by Goff (2009) 78–135. Her book belongs to the Duckworth (now Bloomsbury) Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy Series. Consistent with the features of this series, Goff's work provides an introduction to Euripides' play

¹⁷⁷ A full-scale examination of this feature is in Vivante (2013).

that includes, but does not focus exclusively on, a comprehensive discussion of its reception in literature, theatre, and cinema, with an emphasis on the 20th century.

The only two studies which specifically pertain to the reception of *Trojan Women* strictly focus on the theatrical reception either spanning the last and present centuries in Europe, the Middle East and, partly, the United States, or concentrated in one significant occasion and geographical area, i.e., Australia. The first of these two studies is Willis' D. Phil. Thesis (2005).¹⁷⁸ It consists of a very extensive analysis of the recent performance history of this play (from Murray's translation, 1905, and its several productions in different places to some American productions after 11th September 2001). This analysis is based on detailed examination of (1) practical elements, such as directorial and design choices (e.g., costumes, set, lighting, music, etc.), (2) promotional materials (press releases, programmes, posters, etc.), and (3) contemporary local reviews, with some attention to the public reception, too. The second study that I could identify consists of a collection of five essays on a specific, notable production, i.e., the Sidney Theatre Company's 2008 production of *The Women of Troy*, adapted by Tom Wright and Barrie Kosky, and directed by Kosky himself. This collection has been published by *Didaskalia. The Journal for Ancient Performance* 8 (2001) 26–74. It is prefaced by an introduction by E. Hale, the guest editor for the collection. With the purpose of showing how Australian theatre, critics, and scholars are actively engaged in reflections over classical drama, and how Australian classical reception studies is a continuing field of investigation, the essays of this collection represent an interesting range of disciplinary approaches: from the point of view of performance studies to the perspective of gender and cultural studies, from the examination of the impact of the musical elements of the play to the examination of the 'ethics of shock' in Kosky's presentation of some peculiar features, such as material drawn from war photography and films. The violence of war and the anti-war theme remain the focus of the production and are filtered through the different approaches and expertise of the contributors to this collection.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

Literature

- Goff, B. (2009) "Tony Harrison, *Common Chorus II*," in Goff (2009) 91–104.
 Perris, S. (2010–2011) "The Kingdom of Heaven Within Us:" Inner (World) Peace in Gilbert Murray's *Trojan Women*, *Comparative Drama* 44.4/45.1: 423–40.

¹⁷⁸ With Prof. Oliver Taplin as supervisor (Magdalen College, Trinity Term 2005).

- Philippo, S. (2013) *Hellenic Whispers: Modes of Greek Literary Influence in Seventeenth-Century French Drama*. Frankfurt am main: Peter Lang, 353–503.
- Weintraub, S. (2009) "Shaw's *Troy Heartbreak House* and Euripides' *Trojan Women*," *SHAW. The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* 29: 41–9.

Fine Arts

- Fitzgerald, W. (2004) "Fatalis Machina : Berlioz's *Les Troyens*," *Materiali e Discussioni* 52.1: 199–210.
- Mausser, S. (1990) "Aribert Reimanns *Troades*: literarische Aneignung und musikalische Komposition," in Csobadi, P. (ed.) (1990) *Antike Mythen im Musiktheater des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Gesammelte Vortraege des Salzburger Symposions 1989) Salzburger, 297–306.
- Taplin, O. (2007) *Pots & Plays. Interactions between Tragedy and Greek vase-painting of the Fourth Century B.C.* Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum (pp. 108–65).

Stage and Screen

- Bakogianni, A. (2009) "Voices of Resistance: Michael Cacoyannis' *The Trojan Women* (1971)," *Bulletin of the Institute of the Classical Studies* 52: 45–68.
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Hecuba

Eric Dugdale

Already in Homer's Iliad, Hecuba is the archetypal grieving mother, the mater dolorosa. There she witnesses and mourns the killing of her dearest son Hector and the mutilation of his body by his enemy Achilles. In Euripides' play (Hekabe in Greek, more commonly referred to as Hecuba, the Latinized form), Hecuba is subject to further acts of brutality. Her daughter Polyxena is chosen as a human sacrifice to appease the ghost of Achilles. And Polydorus, her youngest and last remaining son, is brutally murdered by Polymestor, the very man to whom he had been entrusted for safekeeping. Hecuba retains her maternal instincts; she pleads with Odysseus that he sacrifice her instead of her daughter, and she laments at the head of her son Polydorus. But she does more: she takes matters into her own hands, coopting the other Trojan women to join her in murdering Polymestor's sons and gouging out his eyes. "He has paid the penalty to me," she triumphantly exclaims (ll. 1052–3).¹ Hecuba is rendered savage by the atrocities of war, and the play closes with Dionysus' prophecy, reported by Polymestor, that she will be transformed into a "bitch with fiery eyes" (l. 1265). Polymestor closes his speech by denouncing women as evil (ll. 1177–82). His revulsion towards women as perpetrators of violence has been shared by many and explains why Hecuba has largely been ignored in Euripidean reception. While the rage of Achilles has been the inspiration for many later works, that of Hecuba has been seen as inappropriate and destabilizing. Thus the Hecuba of Euripides' Trojan Women is more frequently represented: there, Hecuba performs the gendered role of grieving woman, resigned to her fate. She reacts to Polyxena's sacrifice and Astyanax's murder with grief, not revenge, and urges her daughter Andromache to live in

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hope (Trojan Women 632–3) and win over her captor-husband Neoptolemus with her charm (ll. 697–705). In recent years, however, there has been renewed interest in Euripides' Hecuba and a willingness to confront its uncomfortable subject matter head-on.

In Literature

Euripides' *Hecuba*, first performed in Athens during the Peloponnesian war, probably in 424 BC or thereabouts, is Hecuba's play. The queen of high-towered Troy has already suffered the horrors of watching her husband and surviving sons executed and daughters brutally raped, events described in the lost Epic Cycle. Now, as the play opens in a makeshift encampment on the Chersonese peninsula in Thrace, she is being deported to Greece as a prisoner of war along with the other war widows and children. Although she is the play's protagonist, Hecuba is defined in relation to others. Her suffering is that of a mother powerless to prevent the killings of Polydorus, her youngest son, and of her daughter Polyxena. As the ghost of Polydorus announces in the prologue, "on this day our mother shall see two corpses of two children," (ll. 44–6). These atrocities are followed by the revenge killing of Polymestor's two sons and the blinding of Polymestor himself by Hecuba and her fellow Trojan prisoners.

Hecuba first learns that not all may be well with Polydorus through a troubling dream, and appeals to the gods of the underworld to save her son (l. 79). In her dream the ghost of Achilles has also appeared, demanding the life of a Trojan girl (ll. 94–5). Again, she appeals to the gods to avert this fate from her daughter (ll. 96–7). In this play, however, prayers to the gods are made in vain. Indeed, Polydorus' ghost has already made an appearance in the prologue to describe how he was brutally murdered by his host Polymestor, who killed him for his gold and cast his body into the sea. Thus the fate that Hecuba seeks to avert is a *fait accompli*. And Hecuba's prayer for Polyxena's safety is ironically followed by the arrival of the chorus to announce that she has been chosen for sacrifice at Achilles' tomb.

When Odysseus arrives to collect the young woman for sacrifice, Hecuba appeals to him with the strongest suit she has. Claspings his knees in supplication, she reminds him of the time when she spared his life when he was in a similar position of helplessness. Pity towards a suppliant and reciprocity towards those who have shown one favor are values typically highly regarded in Greece. But Odysseus, like Polymestor, shows a degree of capriciousness that reminds us that the powerful rarely hold themselves to such values unless doing so is in their self-interest.

Polyxena surprises everyone by refusing to supplicate Odysseus for her life, choosing instead to go nobly to her death. Soon after her departure, the herald Talthybius enters to recount the details of her sacrifice and report her last words (ll. 547–52):

You Argives, who have sacked my city, I die of my own accord. Let no one take hold of my body; for I will offer my neck with a brave heart. By the gods, leave me free as you kill me, so that I may die a free woman. For since I am a princess, I am ashamed to be called a slave among the dead.

Hecuba takes comfort in Polyxena's nobility and makes preparations to give her burial. Her laments for herself and her house (ll. 619–28) comprise traditional sentiments on the fragility of human happiness and the vanity of wealth and social status. The subsequent choral ode reminds us that ordinary Trojans have suffered too. More surprisingly, the chorus of Trojan women also imagine the sorrow felt by their Spartan counterparts as they lament their fallen young men "beside the fair-flowing Eurotas" (l. 650). Their empathy is focalized in the figure of the mother leading the *goos* ("lament"). The suffering of women as a consequence of wars initiated and perpetrated by men is a leitmotif of the play; this suffering is borne communally and experienced empathetically.

The quiet pause in which Hecuba gathers the accouterments for burial is interrupted by the arrival of a maidservant to report further misfortune. She brings with her a shrouded body. Euripides makes much of the double catastrophe that befalls Hecuba; indeed it distinguishes her from all others as the undisputed crowned victor in the category of "utterly wretched" (ἡ παναθλία, l. 658, a poignant play on the language of athletic competition); thus here as elsewhere Hecuba serves as the archetype of pathos, the tragic figure extraordinaire. The maidservant pronounces Hecuba as among the living dead, "without child, without husband, without city, utterly destroyed" (ἄπαις, ἄνανδρος, ἄπολις, ἐξεφθαρμένη, l. 669; cf. Hecuba's self-designation at ll. 810–1). The non-gendered expression "without child" allows Hecuba to assume that the maidservant is referring to the death of Polyxena; subsequently she supposes that it is her daughter Cassandra who has been killed. Only when she uncovers the body does she realize that it is that of her son Polydorus. In recognizing the body she also realizes the signification of her dream. The enormity of the deed is emphasized through comparison: unlike Polyxena, Polydorus was murdered by the very man to whom he was sent for protection.

With the arrival of Agamemnon, Hecuba faces a choice. Does she shield herself from further pain and disappointment, assuming that all Argive leaders

are heartless? Or does she take a risk, hoping that this time her supplication will succeed? She chooses to appeal for justice and pours out to Agamemnon the details of her son's murder. Even before this, he feels pity for her (ll. 763, 783, 785, 850–1). But her appeal to him to consider the favor owed her daughter Cassandra, his war concubine, raises a concern about public opinion (ll. 858–9): “the army considers this man [Polymestor] a friend, but the dead man an enemy.” Agamemnon does not want it to be thought that he acted for Cassandra's sake against an ally (ll. 855–6). The exchange between Hecuba and Agamemnon uncovers the impossible position occupied by the women who have been forced into spear-prize concubinage.² As bedfellows of their conquerors and objects of their lust, they deserve return (χάριν, l. 830) for the pleasure (χάρις, l. 832) they provide. And yet they are still considered enemies, and their conquerors do not want to be seen as acting in their favor (χάριν, l. 855). So Agamemnon rejects Hecuba's request for help. She must instead settle for his acquiescence in allowing her to punish Polymestor herself, though he remains skeptical of her capacity as a woman to accomplish this (l. 882).

Like other Euripidean female protagonists (Medea, Electra), Hecuba proves adept at devising a plan of subterfuge to carry out her vengeance. Through the maidservant she summons Polymestor and his sons; they walk unsuspectingly into her trap. Indeed, Polymestor expresses sympathy and offers to help. His falseness is rivaled only by Hecuba's ingenuity. First she arouses his cupidity by mentioning caves hiding the royal gold. Then she asks him to safeguard the money she has secreted out of Troy, which lies hidden in her tent. Thus Hecuba undoes Polymestor through the same avarice that had impelled his crime against her son, duping him with her demure attitude. As Hecuba and the maidservant escort Polymestor and his sons into the tent, where a cabal of women awaits them, the chorus predicts of Polymestor that (l. 1034) “by an unwarlike hand you will lose your life.”

Instead, it is only his two sons who are killed, while Polymestor is blinded. This allows Hecuba to exult over her son's murderer. The horrific violence is related in detail. Polymestor was stripped and held down (the fate that Polyxena avoided through her ‘masculine’ bravery), and blinded with women's brooches. Nor is the aggression unilateral: Polymestor sought to strike the women (ll. 1039–41, 1172–4) and continues to imagine a brutal revenge (ll. 1070–4, 1125–6).

In her third and final *agôn*, Hecuba wins out over Polymestor: Agamemnon pronounces in her favor, on the grounds that Polymestor's violation of *xenia*

2 Gaca (2010).

(guest friendship) deserves to be punished and is reprehensible to Greek values (ll. 1247–51). As later in his *Trojan Women*, Euripides uses irony and inversion to question Greek claims to moral superiority.³ Polymestor is appalled to have been defeated by a slave woman (ll. 1252–3), and takes comfort in revealing the future deaths of Hecuba, Cassandra and Agamemnon.⁴ Whereas in Euripides' *Trojan Women* her final words bid her limbs carry her to a life of slavery (ll. 1228–30), in *Hecuba* her liberation through death is predicted: of her own accord (αὐτῇ, l. 1263), not under compulsion (l. 1262), she will climb the ship's mast and achieve her metamorphosis into a dog in the moment of her death, presumably through suicide. Although in the final action of the play (ll. 1293–5; cf. *Trojan Women* 1328–32) she will accompany the chorus down to the seashore to embark on Greek ships, we know that she will be spared the life of slavery that her countrywomen will face.

Like many Attic tragedies, Euripides' *Hecuba* draws on events surrounding the Trojan war, and therefore has Homer's *Iliad* and other, now lost, poems in the Epic Cycle as its backdrop. The sacrifice of Polyxena at the tomb of Achilles, for example, was already treated in the *Iliou Persis* ("Sack of Troy") attributed to Arctinus (date unknown),⁵ and is also represented in figurative art of the 6th and 5th centuries BC; these correspond with the account of Ibycus, a lyric poet of the 6th century,⁶ in having Achilles' son Neoptolemus carry out the sacrifice. Polyxena's voluntary sacrifice, however, seems to be an Euripidean innovation, giving the young girl a startling and unsettling involvement in her own death that has been variously interpreted as enacting female agency and as sanctioning female victimhood.⁷ It prefigures the similar acquiescence by Iphigenia, another virgin sacrificed to advance the Greek expedition, in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, performed posthumously ca. 405 BC.⁸

3 Morwood (2014) 389 connects this testing of identities with the liminal setting of the play at the boundary between the Greek and barbarian worlds. On the irony of the Greeks' claims to moral superiority, see also above, p. 47.

4 Agamemnon's murder through "an endless robe, a garment of evils" is predicted in Sophocles' *Polyxena* (fr. 526), also directly to Agamemnon.

5 Also above, p. 45 n. 2.

6 Fr. 307: Page (1962) 156.

7 For analysis of Polyxena's sacrifice and varying responses to it, see Foley (2015) 42–5. See also above, pp. 55–7.

8 For parallels between the sacrifice of Iphigenia en route to Troy and that of Polyxena on the way from Troy in Euripides' handling in *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Hecuba* respectively, see Friedrich (1935) 98–100. For significant differences, see Gregory (1999) xx. For a discussion of the complex web of allusions to Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in *Hecuba*, see Thalmann (1993).

The murder of Polydorus by Polymestor may well have been a Euripidean invention. In Homer's *Iliad*, Polydorus is killed on the battlefield by a spear-cast of Achilles (20. 407–23). He is Priam's son by Laothoe, not Hecuba (21. 84–92; 22. 46–8). Euripides takes Priam's youngest and dearest son (cf. *Iliad* 20. 407–10) and makes his treacherous murder the act that impels his mother Hecuba to her startling retaliation. Indeed, Polymestor may be a figure entirely invented by Euripides, as also the setting in Thrace, one of several exotic and barbarian locales that Euripides chooses for his plays.⁹ Thrace typically conjured up images of the wild and lawless back of beyond in the Athenian imaginary: it was once the imagined home of the Amazons, more recently a common source for slaves.

It also seems likely that Euripides invented Hecuba's bold acts of revenge, an innovation in keeping with Euripides' tendency to stage powerful and vengeful women. So too there is no evidence of preexisting accounts of Hecuba's metamorphosis into a dog, death at sea, and connection to Cynossema or "Dog's tomb," the landmark on a promontory of the Chersonese peninsula which served as a marker (and perhaps also beacon) for sailors navigating the Hellespont; these etiological elements are characteristic of the conclusions of a number of Euripidean tragedies.¹⁰ Her transformation into a hound of vengeance is all the more startling after she has played the traditional female roles of suppliant, mourner, and self-denying victim earlier in the play. In ascribing innovations to Euripides, certitude is impossible because many works have been lost, including Sophocles' *Polyxena*, one surviving fragment of which (fr. 523 Radt) suggests that it too had a ghost (that of Achilles) deliver the prologue. Overall, however, the scanty evidence from Sophocles' *Polyxena* suggests that Euripides offered a treatment of Polyxena's sacrifice that differed substantially from that of Sophocles' play, which probably predated it.¹¹

Evidence in other literary works indicates that *Hecuba* continued to be performed after its premiere at Athens. Theodorus, an Athenian actor famous for his interpretation of female roles, may have brought the tyrant Alexander of Pherae (ruled 369–58 BC) to tears with his performance of the sufferings of Hecuba and Polyxena.¹² In 330 BC, the orator Demosthenes accuses

9 Euripides seems to have also invented a Thracian genealogy for Hecuba as daughter of the Thracian king Cisseus.

10 Contra Stephanopoulos (1980) 82–3 and Synodinou (2005) 48–57, who posit a preexisting local Thracian tradition, and Mossman (1995) 35–6, rather more cautious.

11 Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006) 43–66.

12 Cf. Plutarch, *Moralia* 334a–b, though at Plutarch, *Life of Pelopidas* 29 the same incident is reported and the parts are described as those of Hecuba and Andromache in *Trojan Women*, a confusion that is common and, as Mossman (1995) 218 notes, revealing.

his opponent Aeschines of butchering his parts as an actor, and cites as first exhibit Polydorus' opening line in the prologue of *Hecuba* (Demosthenes, *On the Crown* 18. 267). And lines from the play are being quoted by Aristophanes (probably at *Clouds* 718–9 and certainly at *Clouds* 1165–6, also in an extract from his lost *Geratydes*, fr. 156 Kassel-Austin) and Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1394b). In the quotation by Aristotle, we see the beginnings of the practice of excerpting particularly cogent sentences as *gnomai* or maxims applied to the human condition in general, here *Hecuba* 864–5: “There is no mortal who is free: either he is the slave of money or of fate.” *Hecuba*, with its focus on justice and punishment, rhetorical persuasion, and the fragility of human fortune, was a natural source for such quotations, and became regularly used as a school text in the Hellenistic period, a role and popularity that continued in the Roman, Byzantine and Renaissance periods. The play features prominently, for example, in the anthology of excerpts from Greek authors compiled by Stobaeus (5th century AD).

Roman authors frequently engaged with Euripides' plays, offering responses that ranged from translation through adaptation to bold innovation. The *Hecuba* of the playwright Ennius (239–169 BC), although surviving only in lines quoted by other Roman authors, appears to have offered a Latin version that closely resembled Euripides' play, often preserving metaphors and sentiments and at points providing something akin to a translation. So, for example, in Euripides' play, Hecuba entreats Odysseus to use his influence with the Achaean army to dissuade them from sacrificing Polyxena: “Even if you speak poorly,” Hecuba adds (*Hecuba* 293–5), “your reputation will persuade them: for a speech given by a nonentity does not carry the same weight as that given by someone who is respected, even if it is the same speech.” The 2nd-century AD grammarian Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* 11. 4) remarks that Ennius certainly did not come out unfavorably in rivaling these lines when translating Euripides' tragedy. Noting that Ennius rendered this in the same number of lines as Euripides, he proceeds to quote Ennius' version: “Even if you speak erroneously, you will easily persuade the Achaeans: for when the wealthy and the lowly speak equally, the same words and same speech do not carry equal weight.”¹³

13 This same degree of fidelity to Euripides' text is not found in a number of the excerpts attributed to Ennius' *Hecuba* quoted by the Roman grammarian Nonius (4th–5th century AD), suggesting that Ennius' handling of the Euripidean material may have varied. A single reference to an otherwise unknown *Hecuba* by the poet Accius (170–ca. 86 BC) in Priscian (*Institutiones grammaticae* 2. 264) might be a misattribution of an extract from Ennius' play: see Jocelyn (1967) 304–5.

Ennius' nephew Pacuvius (ca. 220–130 BC), by contrast, showed greater independence and had a penchant for the unusual, as is clear from fragments of plays whose subject-matter overlap with that of Attic tragedy. In his *Iliona* (cf. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 209), Priam's eldest daughter Iliona is married to Polymestor. She passes off her brother Polydorus, whom Priam has entrusted her for safe-keeping, as Deipylus, her son by Polymestor, thus giving the two boys, of the same age and raised together, each other's identity. Polymestor unwittingly kills his son Deipylus (also spelled Deiphilus) thinking him to be Polydorus, whom Agamemnon has persuaded him to kill. Many suspect a post-Euripidean tragedy as his source, though it is also possible that Pacuvius is inventing. The surviving excerpts suggest that Pacuvius' *Iliona*, like Euripides' *Hecuba*, seeks revenge on Polymestor, and wishes to gash out his eyes. Pacuvius is characteristic of many Roman authors in their free handling of material found in Greek authors. Indeed, their relationship with the myths of the Trojan war and its aftermath was quite different from their Greek sources, since Romans viewed themselves as descendants of the Trojan Aeneas.

In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the coast of Thrace is the first destination for Aeneas and his fellow refugees as they flee from smoldering Troy (3. 13–68). Here, in land once allied to Troy and well suited to cultivation, he plans to found a new city that he names Aeneadae. While conducting inaugural sacrifices, however, he witnesses a dire portent: the shrubbery he uproots to lay on the altar drips with blood, and he hears the voice of Polydorus from the tumulus below urging him not to violate his burial ground, but to flee from this "greedy shore" (*Aeneid* 3. 44). In an excursus (3. 49–57) Aeneas recounts Polydorus' death at the hands of Polymestor, familiar from Euripides' *Hecuba*. The one telling difference is that Virgil presents allegiance to the victorious Greeks as a motivation for Polymestor's murderous act along with his greed for gold, whereas Euripides has Polymestor claiming he acted out of fear of being embroiled in war should Polydorus "gather Troy and found the city again," (*Hecuba* 1139). Thus Virgil finds the seeds for his motif of Aeneas' attempted founding of a new Troy in Euripides, but develops it in a way that allies the turncoat Polymestor with the deceptive Greeks while emphasizing Polydorus' kinship with the Trojans (3. 42–3). Aeneas responds to Polydorus' request by dutifully according him new funeral rites and turning his back on this land where "hospitality is violated" (3. 61). The repeated references to the favorable winds (3. 69–70, cf. 3. 61) engage with the parallel motif in Euripides' play, suggesting that the pious Trojan refugees are sped on their journey by propitious gods.¹⁴

14 For extensive discussion of the adverse and then favorable winds in *Hecuba* and the possible implications for our reading of the sacrifice of Polyxena and the act of revenge against Polymestor, see Gregory (1999) xxix–xxxi, drawing in part on Kovacs (1996) 63–5.

The Augustan poet Ovid (43 BC–17/18 AD) in his monumental epic poem, the *Metamorphoses*, naturally describes the transformation of Hecuba into a dog. But his account also includes an extended narrative leading up to this, beginning with vignettes at Troy as Hecuba, last to board the ships, is found among the tombs of her children (13. 404–28).¹⁵ The narrative then follows the fleet to Thrace (13. 429–575), where the terrifying ghost of Achilles appears to Agamemnon demanding Polyxena's sacrifice, and the girl is torn from her mother's arms. Her death is vividly and empathetically related by the poet as narrator, without recourse to the messenger speech of Talthybius. Ovid engages with Euripides' version throughout, and also in places with Virgil's. In the latter case he seems to be emulating his fellow Roman and at times deliberately avoiding overlap. So, for example, he omits Virgil's portent of the bloody shoots, once the spears that killed Polydorus (*Aeneid* 3. 22–33, 45–6), although this incident is well suited to his poem as an instance of metamorphosis.¹⁶ Like Euripides, Ovid links the deaths of Polyxena and Polydorus, but does so even more dramatically: while Hecuba prepares to draw water from the sea to wash Polyxena's blood-spattered body, she suddenly sees the mangled corpse of Polydorus cast up on the shore. Just as sudden is Hecuba's fury, which she directs against Polymestor in a vengeful ruse that follows Euripides' plot quite closely. The blinding of Polymestor is even more visceral: while in Euripides the Trojan women stab his eyes with their brooches, in Ovid it is Hecuba herself who gouges out his eyes with her bare hands. As the Thracians seek to defend their king from assault, Hecuba growls, bites at the stones they throw, and barks when she tries to speak. Thus in Ovid's version her metamorphosis is most directly associated with her rage.

Hecuba's metamorphosis into a dog is probably the aspect of Euripides' play that has elicited the greatest degree of divergence of opinion. Some scholars have seen it in a negative light, a dehumanization that is the consequence of the brutal revenge that she commits.¹⁷ Others have viewed it in a more positive light, arguing that her revenge would have been seen by an ancient audience as justified, citing examples of dog imagery in Greek literature that have positive associations, and noting that her tomb will serve as a landmark for sailors, taken as a positive function.¹⁸ Two overlapping but separate questions need to

15 See also above, pp. 51–3.

16 Hopkinson (2000) 22–3.

17 Nussbaum (1986) 413–6; Michelini (1987) 172–3; Reckford (1991) 14–7; Segal (1993) 105, 158–9; Morwood (2014) 391.

18 Meridor (1978); Kovacs (1987) 108–9; Gregory (1991) 110–2; Burnett (1994); Burnett (1998) 163–74; Gregory (1999) xxxiv–xxxvi; Synodinou (2005) 48–57; Matthiessen (2010) 31–3; Foley (2015) 58–60 offers an extensive presentation of the arguments made on both sides.

be addressed. Are we to see Hecuba's revenge as justified? And how are we to view her metamorphosis into a dog? Although Athenians in Euripides' time would likely have seen procedural justice rather than vendetta justice as the normal avenue for redress, Hecuba as a female, non-Greek war-captive has no prospect of any law court that will hear her case: indeed, Agamemnon, the *de facto* decision-maker, has both refused to take up her case (out of self-interest) and sanctioned Polymestor's punishment by some other means (Euripides, *Hecuba* 852–63). And the sham tribunal over which Agamemnon later presides, though judging in Hecuba's favor, shows how morally bankrupt the system is. In the court of public opinion, Hecuba's reprisal may also have been viewed with sympathy if not outright enthusiasm. Certainly Polymestor is presented as a character of unalloyed evil, and even after his horrendous punishment he remains slippery and savage. Euripides further mitigates the acts of revenge by presenting them as carried out by the Trojan fellow-captives alongside Hecuba; this act of solidarity in responding to the victim's plight is not insignificant in shaping our sympathies. Furthermore, the focus of the scene is primarily on the unremorseful Polymestor, not on his slain children, whose innocence would elicit pity.

We may feel sympathy for Hecuba, and understand and even support her desperate acts. But this does not lessen the devastation and horror they cause, nor are we likely to find Hecuba's end comforting. It is Polymestor who relates the prophecy of her metamorphosis into a dog, the first of a series of deaths he pronounces for his enemies and their loved ones (Hecuba, Agamemnon, Cassandra). Thus Hecuba's metamorphosis accompanies her death and great fall, and will put an end, he predicts, to her exultation (ll. 1257–65). Hecuba does not dispute this. The brutal acts that she has suffered and committed have left her numb and resigned to her fate: "Nothing matters to me," she replies, "now that you have paid me punishment," (l. 1274). This nothingness is a heavy toll indeed, and is further reflected in Hecuba's loss of personhood and name.¹⁹ Nor does the description of her metamorphosis into a "bitch with fiery eyes" (l. 1265) activate any of the positive associations that scholars have noted for dogs in some ancient contexts. Yes, we can perhaps read into the imagery the maternal protectiveness of a dog for her pups, but it is Hecuba's savage ferocity that is foregrounded and remembered. Even her tomb is not presented as the boon to sailors, a landmark that guides them safely on their voyage, that some make it out to be. It too belongs to Polymestor's speech act, and he characterizes it only as the "tomb of an ill-fated bitch, a sign to sailors" (l. 1273). This sign (τέχμαρ) is polyvalent, to Polymestor surely a warning to sailors of

19 Michelini (2006) 172.

lurking danger.²⁰ There is no triumph or rehabilitation for Hecuba at the end of the play, which closes with the chorus leader bidding her fellow slaves “go to the harbors and tents, friends, to taste the misery of despotism: for fate is cruel” (ll. 1293–5).

Hecuba’s metamorphosis into a dog is an aspect of Euripides’ narrative that fascinated many later authors, as is apparent in the sheer number of sources in which it features. Ancient authors and commentators variously associate this transformation with her grief,²¹ bitterness and savagery,²² and suicide as an escape from slavery.²³ The details can differ significantly: so, for example, (Pseudo-)Lycophron (3rd or 2nd century BC) in his *Alexandra* (ll. 330–4) describes the metamorphosis as occurring after Hecuba’s death by stoning, executed in response to the curses she utters; she is transformed into “grey-tailed Maira”, the dog of Erigone, after undergoing catasterism; later in the poem (ll. 1174–88) Hecate adopts her as her attendant, and Odysseus builds her a cenotaph on the Sicilian promontory of Pachynus to atone for her death.²⁴

Seneca’s *Troades* (“Trojan Women”) is a complex, powerful and influential play.²⁵ It dramatizes the aftermath of the fall of Troy, with the sacrifice of Polyxena and the killing of Astyanax its two central plot elements. Seneca draws on Euripides’ *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, along with Sophocles’ *Polyxena* and no doubt other sources.²⁶ But he also shows considerable independence

20 The headland was no doubt already named Kynossema prior to Euripides’ play, and may already have been associated with Hecuba in local lore. This landmark may have served a positive function, helping sailors navigate the narrow Hellespont, especially if it incorporated a fire-beacon (cf. Euripides, *fr.* 968 in Collard/Cropp [2008] 72–3); but this positive functioned is not referred to in *Hecuba* or in other accounts of the metamorphosis, and the only prior reference to Hecuba as a dog in the play (Hecuba and her fellow Trojans described by Polymestor as “blood-thirsty bitches”, *Hecuba* 1173) is negative.

21 *Fr.* 965: Page (1962) 516 (a lyric fragment quoted by the orator and historian Dio Chrysostomus 33.59 (1st century AD): the Erinyes transform her into a “fiery-eyed bitch” whose howls resound around the Troad); Nicander, *fr.* 62 [Gow/Scholfield 1953] (at the death of Priam and destruction of Troy); Quintus Smyrnaeus 14. 347–553 (at the loss of Polyxena; immediately thereafter she is turned to stone, and is transported at the bidding of the prophet Calchas across to the Thracian side of the Hellespont. Earlier Hecuba is compared to a bitch howling after her newborn puppies have been cast away by her masters, 14. 280–8).

22 Plautus, *Menaechmi* 714–8; Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 3. 63.

23 Hyginus, *Fabulae* 111.1; Servius on *Aeneid* 3. 6.

24 See Forbes Irving (1990) 207–10 for a comprehensive analysis of ancient treatments of this topic, including comparison to Cadmus’ and Niobe’s transformations after great suffering.

25 For a full discussion in this volume, see above, pp. 53–62.

26 For a list of passages drawing on Euripides’ *Hecuba*, see Matthiessen (2010) 55, n. 104.

and originality in his handling, consistent with the love of novelty typical of Neronian literature.²⁷ Often his practice is to take a motif and to develop it at greater length, in ways that reflect his own aesthetic and philosophical proclivities. Compared to her roles in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, Seneca's Hecuba is not as dominant. The play alludes to a wide range of incidents in the Trojan war and its aftermath, and it has a large cast of characters. The Greeks play a more prominent role, and their disagreement over Polyxena's sacrifice becomes a major plot element in Act 2, with a rehabilitated Agamemnon opposing Achilles' demand and thereby coming into conflict with Pyrrhus (another name for Neoptolemus), Achilles' equally ruthless son, before Calchas' prophecy decides the fates of both Polyxena and Astyanax. Helen, already a foil to the suffering Trojans in Euripides' *Trojan Women*, arrives in Act 4 under orders to deceive Hecuba and Andromache into believing that Polyxena is to be married to Pyrrhus. This Senecan innovation thus serves to juxtapose the suffering of the innocent with the impunity of Helen, a figure whose culpability has long been a favorite crux of literature. With bitter irony and a self-awareness characteristic of Senecan characters, Helen exclaims in her opening words (*Troades* 861–3): "Any marriage that is funereal, joyless, bringing laments, slaughters, blood, and groans, deserves Helen as its officiator." Andromache responds with equally acerbic sarcasm (ll. 891–2): "Would anyone hesitate to enter a marriage which Helen advocates?" At the same time, in defending herself to Andromache and Hecuba, Helen emphasizes her own victimization and coercion, and wishes that death would cut short her life (l. 939). Polyxena, though still a noble character who faces death with courage, inflected as Stoic equanimity, is in Seneca's play deprived of her voice, a mute character whose fate others discuss in her presence. Indeed, the description of her sacrifice by the Messenger in Act 5 presents it as a spectacle watched by the Greek mob with repugnance and fascination ("The majority of the foolish mob hates the crime and gazes", ll. 1128–9) and by the Trojans with terror.²⁸ No mention is made of the Polymestor episode; Hecuba and her fellow Trojan war-captives thus remain exclusively victims rather than aggressors.

Medieval works treating myths about Troy abound, but their debt to Euripides is slight. Many of them include narratives describing the sufferings of Hecuba and the sacrifice of Polyxena, the latter presented as ensuing from Achilles' love for the maiden. In England and France, mythological traditions laid claim to Trojan ancestry, through Brut and Astyanax, who were believed to be founders of London, characterized as *Troynovant* ("New

27 Fantham (1982) 71.

28 See also above, p. 62.

Troy”), and Paris respectively. Sources such as the 4th century AD *Ephemeris belli Troiani* (“Journal of the Trojan War”), a Latin translation of a work Greek account attributed to Dictys Cretensis (Dictys of Crete), and *De excidio Troiae historia* (“Accounts of the Fall of Troy”), dating to the 5th or 6th century AD and spuriously seen as deriving from a work by Dares Phrygius (Dares of Phrygia), were widely read in the Middle Ages. They were major influences on the *Roman de Troie* (“Romance of Troy”) composed by the French poet Benoît de Sainte-Maure (ca. 1160), and the *Historia destructionis Troiae* (“Account of the Destruction of Troy”) by the Italian poet Guido delle Colonne, completed in 1287,²⁹ which were translated into other languages and in turn influenced the works of others, including Geoffrey Chaucer, Giovanni Boccaccio, William Caxton, and William Shakespeare. Indeed, William Caxton’s 1473 translation of the French romance *Recueil des Histoires de Troye* (“Collection of Stories of Troy”) by Raoul Lefèvre, was the first book printed in the English language.

In the works of early humanists, these medieval traditions intersected with the narratives of Euripides and Ovid. Hecuba’s metamorphosis into a dog, for instance, was allegorized as an example of how passions can transform humans into subhuman beings.³⁰ So in Dante Alighieri’s *Inferno* (ca. 1314), “Sad, wretched, captive Hecuba, after she saw Polyxena dead, and the sorrowful one became aware of her Polydorus on the shore of the ocean, raving mad she barked like a dog, so greatly had the anguish distorted her mind,” (30. 16–21). Hecuba serves as the embodiment of misfortune, thereby having a cameo role in many works, perhaps most famously in song 16 of *Carmina Burana*, a collection of songs dating from the 11th to the 13th centuries found in a manuscript in Benediktbeuern, Germany:

rex sedet in vertice,
caveat ruinam;
nam sub axe legimus
Hecubam reginam.

A king sits at the top [of Fortune’s wheel],
let him beware ruin;
For under the wheel we read
‘Queen Hecuba’.

29 Regarding Guido delle Colonne’s work, see also below, pp. 147–9.

30 Brumble (1998) 152.

The well-known Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio, the so-called ‘father of humanism’, introduces Hecuba in his *De mulieribus claris* (“Lives of Famous Women”), a work composed in 1362 in response to Petrarch’s earlier *De viris illustribus* (“Lives of Famous Men”), as “both a notable example of shining glory that passes and an indubitable example of misery” (33. 1). After briefly narrating the deaths of Polyxena and Polydorus, he notes that “some sources have it that under the affliction of such intense and numerous sorrows she became mad and wandered howling like a dog through the Thracian fields.” Her death and burial at Cynossema follow but, like Dante, Boccaccio makes no mention of her act of revenge, which did not fit in with his use of her as an exemplar of maternal grief.³¹

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (ca. 1599), in addition to this familiar representation of Hecuba as the personification of grief and of the ruinous reversal of fortune, we are also presented with her power to incite strong emotions and to transform lament into revenge. “What’s Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba / that he should weep for her?” (2. 2.544–5), ponders Hamlet after he has witnessed the tears of the actor playing Hecuba in the play-within-the-play. Despite Polonius’ attempt to stop the performance, Hecuba’s appearance offers a meta-theatrical foreshadowing that, like the ghosts of Polydorus and Hamlet’s father in Euripides’ and Shakespeare’s plays respectively, reminds the audience of horrendous murder committed out of greed, and ultimately incites the protagonist to revenge. Euripides’ influence on the play has generally been underappreciated. As has been noted, “*Hecuba* offered Shakespeare a classical model for a highly successful, publicly performed tragedy.”³²

The popularity of Euripides’ *Hecuba* in the 16th and early 17th centuries coincided with the emergence of the genre of the revenge tragedy in England during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, with Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, first performed ca. 1587 and a clear influence on *Hamlet*, often seen as the earliest example. From around the late 17th century, however, the play’s popularity and reputation declined, as a greater concern for unity of plot and

31 Boccaccio’s presentation of Polyxena in chapter 33 is similarly gendered. Polyxena’s courage in the face of death amazes Boccaccio in that it held firm in spite of her “tender age, female sex, royal delicacy, and reversed fortune” (33. 3); when he describes how she offered her throat to Neoptolemus’ sword, he adds the qualification, “if any confidence can be placed in the writings of the ancients” (33. 2).

32 Pollard (2012) 1077. Pollard’s article offers a wide-ranging and nuanced exploration of the ways in which *Hecuba* the play and Hecuba as an archetypal character inform *Hamlet* and other works, while also acknowledging the influences of Seneca, Ovid and Virgil. See also Kenward (2011) 27 for discussion of Shakespeare’s transformation of Hecuba’s mourning into a highly politicized act.

of interest led to objections to *Hecuba* on aesthetic grounds, tastes moved away from extreme bloodshed and horror, and the ideal tragedy was viewed as one which incited Aristotelian fear and pity, which the punishment of the unreservedly evil Polymestor could not achieve.³³

Euripides' play has also served as the inspiration for poetry. The English novelist, essayist, and poet Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866) composed a poem titled *Polyxena to Ulysses*. A poetic version of Polyxena's speech at *Hecuba* 342–78 in which she chooses death over slavery, it is suffused with the passionate idealism of the Romantic poets: "Fear not, Ithacan! With willing steps I follow thee, where thou / And strong necessity, thy queen and mine, / Conduct me to my death. Base were my soul / To beg a milder fate." Written in 1815, at a time when Peacock met regularly with his friend Percy Bysshe Shelley to read Greek together, the poem conveys an admiration for the nobility of the human spirit coupled with a melancholy affection for suffering. In 1938 the American poet H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) published *Sea-Choros from Hecuba* as part of her *Red Roses for Bronze* collection, one of many of her poems inspired by Euripidean choruses. It conveys a deeply personal voice even through the distancing framing as a translation of a classical work. Its opening lines ("Wind of the sea, / O where, / where, / where, / through the salt and spray, / do you bear me, / in misery? where, / where, / shall I be brought, / bought as a slave / for what house, shall it be Thessaly?") give an indication of the lyricism and cadence of her poetry, the uncertainty and isolation of the speaker expressed in the insistence with which, throughout the poem, she calls in vain on the sea to answer her. As in Euripides' choral stasimon (*Hecuba* 444–83), the solace usually occasioned by choral song is precluded by the imminent diaspora of the singers; its insistent solitary voice ("I am lost, / I am dead") belongs to Hecuba as much as it does to the chorus of Trojan women.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

The sacrifice of Polyxena is the episode that appears most frequently in the visual arts; the killing of Polydorus, Hecuba's discovery of his body, and the blinding of Polymestor are also represented.

A black-figure Tyrrhenian amphora in the British Museum attributed to the Timiades Painter and dating to ca. 570–550 BC gives a gruesomely explicit

33 See Heath (2003); Mossman (1995) 220–48; Matthiessen (2010) 59–71 for extensive treatment of changing perceptions of the play.

depiction of the sacrifice of Polyxena; each figure in the scene is named. Neoptolemus plunges his sword into the neck of Polyxena as a torrent of blood spurts over the flaming altar below.³⁴ With his left hand he grasps the victim by the hair, as three Greek warriors (Amphilochus, Antiphates, and Ajax, son of Oileus) hold her stiff body, wrapped tightly in a *peplos* (long dress), over the altar. Diomedes and Nestor look on from behind Neoptolemus, while Phoenix, Achilles' tutor, is seen on the far right turning away in apparent grief.

Another representation of Polyxena's sacrifice that predates Euripides' *Hecuba* is found on a large sarcophagus from the Kızöldün tumulus in the Troad dating to 520–500 BC and now in the Çanakkale Museum.³⁵ On one of its long sides, a series of twelve figures is represented. On the far right, Neoptolemus, the only figure facing left, raises his right arm high as he plunges his sword into Polyxena's neck. Her body writhes in resistance, her legs kicking as she is held in place by three soldiers and her hair is pinned down by Neoptolemus. He looks into her eyes in what has been seen as an erotic gaze analogous to Achilles' infatuation with the Amazon queen Penthesileia in the moment of killing her.³⁶ On the left, seven women, in a variety of postures of grief, carry out the *goos* ("lament"), headed by an older woman leaning on a cane, raising her fingers to her nose in a gesture of mourning and looking directly at the soldier holding on to Polyxena's feet, who looks back at her. She has been identified as Hecuba's aged attendant (cf. ἀρχαία λάρτρι, "aged handmaid," Euripides, *Hecuba* 609). On a short side of the sarcophagus, three further female figures mourn; the older seated woman is no doubt Hecuba; she carries a staff in her left hand as she raises her right hand to her veiled forehead in grief and looks in the direction of the sacrifice of Polyxena on the adjacent long side in what is clearly a continuation of the same narrative ensemble. Behind her stand two further women, with hands raised to head in grief. The juxtaposition of male aggressors and female victims is striking in its pathos, though ancient viewers may have had a quite different reaction. Indeed, the location of this artifact, near the tomb of Achilles in the Troad, and its funereal context (the sarcophagus contained the body of a man, though it may have been originally intended

34 Rose (2014) 85 notes that cutting the neck, and thereby severing the carotid artery, was the normal way of killing a sacrificial animal, a comparison that Polyxena herself makes explicit at Euripides, *Hecuba* 205–8.

35 Rose (2014) 72–103 provides extensive analysis of this sarcophagus, its iconography, and archaeological and art-historical contexts. See also Foley (2015) 18–20.

36 See Rose (2014) 85–6.

for a woman) may have lent themselves to a positive reading of the sacrifice as an act of rendering due honor to the hero Achilles.³⁷

The artistic representations of Polyxena's death reflect varying traditions. We have already considered several in which she is sacrificed. In others, she is depicted being led or driven to her death. Sometimes this is at sword-point; in other cases, the evidence is mixed, and perhaps reflects her voluntary acquiescence, as in Euripides' *Hecuba*. A black-figure hydria dating to ca. 500 BC attributed to a painter of the Leagros Group (a group of Attic vase painters active in the late 6th century BC) and now in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin shows a warrior, most probably Neoptolemus, leading a woman towards a tumulus, on which a snake is depicted and over which a representation of Achilles' spirit hovers, further underlining the chthonic connotations of the tableau.³⁸ Neoptolemus, carrying a spear in his left hand, holds Polyxena's right wrist with his right hand and looks back at her, while she looks somberly at the ground, echoing the common representation of a bride being led off to her wedding.³⁹ This conjugal association is made even more strongly in a red-figure cup from Vulci by the Brygos Painter (early 5th century BC), now in the Louvre, where a label identifies the warrior leading Polyxena as Acamas, son of Theseus. The unfastened belt that Polyxena holds in her hand would seem to allude to the tragic 'wedding' with Achilles that she faces in death.⁴⁰

An Etruscan sarcophagus from Torre San Severo in Orvieto (Italy) dating to the late 4th century BC shows a structural parallelism in the scenes depicted on its four sides. On one long side, Achilles kills the Trojan prisoners to avenge the death of Patroclus. He grasps the kneeling victim by the hair with his left hand as he strikes him with his right. Between Achilles and his victim we see the shade of Patroclus. On the opposite long side, Achilles' son Neoptolemus kills Polyxena, standing over his kneeling victim, who is nude from the waist up, with left hand clutching her hair.⁴¹ Again, the dead person for whom the

37 Thus Rose (2014) 87 interprets the tripod depicted next to Achilles' tomb in the relief as characterizing the sacrifice as an act of honor for Achilles. For Polyxena as a *geras* (prize of honor) for Achilles, see Euripides, *Hecuba* 94.

38 Mylonopoulos (2013) 79.

39 Prag (1985) 62.

40 For Polyxena as posthumous bride of Achilles in the literary tradition, see Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006) 42–3.

41 For discussion of female nudity as an indication of vulnerability, see Foley (2015) 44. For Polygnotus' famous 5th century painting of the sacrifice in the Propylaea at Athens, and descriptions of it by the 2nd century BC epigrammatist Pollianus (*Anthologia Graeca* 16. 150) and the rhetorician Libanius (18. 7) in which Polyxena and the painter respectively are praised for attempts to preserve her modesty, see Mossman (1995) 260–1 and Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talboy (2006) 43–4; Mossman is skeptical about the usefulness

sacrifice is being made is represented in front of his own tomb, with Achilles here represented behind Polyxena. On the two short sides of the sarcophagus, scenes from the *Odyssey* are portrayed: on one Odysseus, flanked by two companions transformed into half-animals, threatens Circe with his sword. On the other he sacrifices a ram in preparation for his *nekyia* (conversation with the spirits of the dead). The motifs of sacrifices to appease the dead, and of sorcery and even death evaded are suited to the sepulchral context of the art.⁴²

The Polymestor episode appears on an Apulian *loutrophoros* (a ceremonial vessel with elongated neck used for carrying water) in the British Museum dating to ca. 340–320 BC. The lower band shows a stele and figures approaching it, a typical scene on a vessel intended for use in funeral rites. The upper band depicts the blinding of Polymestor and the *agôn* scene with Agamemnon in the synoptic narrative typical of vase paintings. Polymestor, wearing a Phrygian cap and soft slippers that point to his barbarian identity, stands with legs splayed as he holds out both his arms in a posture that communicates the awkward groping of a blind man. His ornate *chiton* (tunic) and *chlamys* (cloak) billow out in response to his wild movements. A sword lying on the ground probably represents his disarming prior to the blinding. He tilts his head in the direction of Agamemnon, who carries a staff to represent both his regal status and role as arbitrator, and who is accompanied by a young attendant. On the right side and just out of reach of Polymestor's outstretched arms, stands a veiled Hecuba, also accompanied by a young female attendant. Hecuba's white hair and furrowed brow reveal her age and suffering. She watches intently the exchange between Polymestor and Agamemnon. Strikingly, her young maid-servant wraps her right arm around the old woman in comfort and support, and Hecuba holds her clasped hands at her servant's side. As in Euripides' *Hecuba*, it seems as if Hecuba and her fellow Trojan women are partners in both suffering and revenge.⁴³ The intense emotions of the scene are palpable thanks to the skill of the Darius Painter, and the work's indebtedness to Euripides' *Hecuba* is clearly evident.⁴⁴

of Pollianus or Libanius as sources, while Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talbot posit that Sophocles' *Polyxena* may have been influenced by Polygnotus' representation of the sacrifice or vice versa.

42 For detailed analysis of the entire figural tableaux and their correspondences, see Lowenstam (2008) 165–70.

43 For the roles of the chorus of Trojan women as well as her female attendant in supporting Hecuba both in her grief and revenge, see Euripides, *Hecuba* 59–67, 693, 880–7, 889–93, 1042–3, 1049–52, 1063–5, 1095–6, 1120–1.

44 See Taplin (2007) 141–2. As Taplin notes (142), the vase-painting requires knowledge of Euripides' play in order to fully decode it.

It may be surprising to some that the artist chose to represent the arbitration scene rather than the crux of the action, the blinding itself; after all, vase painters clearly did not shy away from representing the sacrifice of Polyxena in graphic detail. It may well be that gender accounts for this, with female violence against a male being a subject that the (male) painter eschewed. It is telling that, even in the arbitration scene, in which she prevails over Polymestor, Hecuba stands to the side and silently observes. Her posture and demeanor even at this moment of agency present her as the grieving mother. Indeed, representations of Hecuba in ancient art generally depict her as a secondary character witnessing the deaths of loved ones rather than making her the artistic focus.⁴⁵ Thus the strong female protagonist of Euripides' *Hecuba* is a remarkable exception.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was the text that was most influential in the figurative arts from the Middle Ages onwards.⁴⁶ Illustrated editions were very popular, translating, adapting and summarizing the poem, with moralizing lessons often added. The 178 woodcuts of the French artist Bernard Salomon in Jean de Tourné's *La Métamorphose d'Ovide Figurée* ("The Illustrated Metamorphoses of Ovid," 1557), frequently copied in other editions, illustrate the murder of Polydorus, the sacrifice of Polyxena, Hecuba's discovery of the body of Polydorus, and the blinding of Polymestor. Since Ovid's narrative draws heavily on Euripides' *Hecuba*, these scenes also illustrate Euripides' play, albeit indirectly. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Polymestor stabs Polydorus with his sword and hurls him from a cliff into the sea (13. 435–8); Salomon's illustration shows him throwing his victim into the sea from a tower, perhaps to parallel the death of Astyanax mentioned twenty lines earlier (*mittitur Astyanax illis de turribus*, "Astyanax is thrown from those towers," 13. 415). Polyxena's courage in the face of death as recounted by Ovid (and his source, Euripides' *Hecuba*) is presented in Salomon's woodcut as the resolve of a Christian martyr: Polyxena kneels on the altar, with hands clasped in a prayer pose, as a savage-looking Neoptolemus prepares to bring his curved sword down on her head. In the next illustration, Hecuba, accompanied by attendants carrying a water jar to collect seawater

45 See extensive treatment at Laurens (1988) IV.1: 473–81, and Mossman (1995) 255–6. Laurens (1988: 480) notes that Hecuba is typically represented veiled, out of decorum or in mourning. She is often shown with her arms extended in supplication, or beating her head. Twice (Laurens [1998] IV.1: 477, entries 27 and 28) she is shown with her breast bared, a mark of intense anguish and perhaps an echo of *Iliad* 22. 79–80.

46 For a substantial if not quite comprehensive list of relevant representations in the arts, see Reid (1991) 11: 907–9 ("Polydorus"), 909–12 ("Polyxena"), 1049–54 ("Trojan War—Fall of Troy").

ter with which to cleanse the body of Polyxena (*Metamorphoses* 13. 534–5, cf. *Hecuba* 609–10, 786), discovers the bloated body of Polydorus washed up on the shore. The body of Polyxena lies in the foreground at Hecuba's feet. Finally, the blinding of Polymestor combines elements of both Ovid's and Euripides' account. Hecuba gouges out the eyes of the prostrate Polymestor, as in Ovid, but she is aided by a band of women who raise aloft huge cudgels. Thracian soldiers rush in with spears at the ready, as in Ovid (13. 565–7, cf. *Hecuba* 1089–90). In the center of the tableau, a dog feeds on scraps, probably a reference to Hecuba's metamorphosis into a dog in Ovid's narrative (13. 565–71). Salomon's illustrations influenced those of many other artists. Other prominent exemplars include the 150 etchings of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by the Italian painter and engraver Antonio Tempesta, published in 1606, known also for his frescoes, and the engravings by the German artist Johann Wilhelm Baur, also 150 in number, published in 1641. Tempesta's illustrations are especially arresting, with their bold use of unusual perspectives, foreshortening, chiaroscuro and dramatic gestures; Baur's illustration of the blinding of Polymestor depicts angry townsfolk wielding clubs and rocks coming to their king's defense.

A vigorous representation of this scene is *Ecuba acceca Polimestore* ("Hecuba Blinding Polymestor"), by the Bolognese baroque painter Giuseppe Maria Crespi, dating to ca. 1700 and now in the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. Crespi offers a Caravaggesque composition in which a young and muscular Hecuba launches herself at Polymestor and plunges her fingers into his eye sockets, as in Ovid. Polymestor recoils as he desperately tries to escape, but Hecuba's grim-faced attendant pins him down. His right hand contorts into a claw rigid with pain, his right leg flails into the foreground as he loses his balance under the force of Hecuba's assault. Hecuba occupies the foreground but is seen from behind, inviting the viewer to see the incident from her perspective.

Scenes from the Trojan cycle were common among the neoclassical paintings that were favored in the Salon of the French Académie des Beaux Arts. Several paintings depicting Hecuba discovering the body of Polydorus were exhibited here. Eugène Ernest Hillemacher presented his oil painting *Hecuba Discovering the Corpse of Her Son Polydorus* at the 1840 show, in which a wind-swept Hecuba discovers the corpse of Polydorus, partially draped in a blood-stained cloth, on a rugged coastal cliff, his legs contorted in rigor mortis. Hecuba's attendants carry water jars, but hers lies fallen on the ground.⁴⁷

47 Schwartz (2005) 178 states that "The captive women have come to the shore to fetch water for their masters," but this seems unlikely given the limited utility of seawater. Rather, the scene represents the plot element found in both Euripides' and Ovid's account, in

Henri-Léopold Lévy made his debut at the Salon with a painting of this subject in 1865 (*Hecuba Finding the Body of Her Son Polydorus on the Shore*), which was awarded a medal. At the 1886 exhibition, three artists, Jean-Albert Cresswell, Pierre-Louis-Emmanuel Croizé, and André-Victor-Edouard Dévambez exhibited paintings titled *Hecuba Despairs at the Sight of Her Murdered Son*: in a bleak and shadowy coastal landscape, they all present Hecuba, wrapped in black robes and accompanied by her attendants, responding with grief and horror to the body of her son at her feet.⁴⁸ All three make dramatic use of lighting to heighten the pathos: in Cresswell's painting, sunshine bursts through the ominous skies to gild the limp body of Polydorus splayed over a rock; in that of Croizé, it is Hecuba's face, bared left breast, and arms extended in grief that are illuminated, while in Dévambez's painting the use of backlighting transforms Hecuba and her shrouded attendants into spectral silhouettes of grief.

The baroque painter Pietro da Cortona painted a sacrifice of Polyxena (*Il sacrificio di Polissena*), commissioned by Marcello Sachetti in around 1623–1624 and now in the Capitoline Museums, that helped establish his reputation and gain further commissions for paintings and frescoes from Pope Urban VIII, Cardinal Barberini and others. Polyxena and Neoptolemus occupy a raised platform at center stage. To the right, a group of six males attend the sacrifice; most prominent among these is a veiled priest who stands in front of Polyxena holding a *patera* (ritual dish) to catch Polyxena's blood, and in the foreground a burly Agamemnon, in full armor wearing a crown, who watches intently at his daughter. At left stand four grief-struck Trojan women, including a veiled Hecuba, Shakespeare's "mobled queen" (*Hamlet* 2. 2. 414), with clasped hands who flings her head back in horror as she averts her eyes. The row of funereal cypresses and the waiting Greek ships in the background contribute to the narrative of the scene. The treatment of Polyxena is very different from that in the illustrated editions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Instead of depicting a modestly clad maiden kneeling in prayerful pose as she resolutely awaits the executioner's blow, Cortona depicts Polyxena partially naked, her robe falling off her right breast, her head tilted up and to the side as she gazes pathetically into the distance, her lips parted. This is not the heroic nudity found in Euripides' *Hecuba* (547–52; 557–65), where Polyxena herself tears her robe to the middle of her waist and shows her breasts, bidding Neoptolemus strike, while commanding the Greeks not to touch her, since she is dying of her own

which Hecuba requires seawater in order to bathe the body of Polyxena. For another work depicting this scene, see *Hecuba Discovering the Corpse of Polydorus* by French sculptor André Joseph Allar (1870).

48 See Schwartz (2005) 178–9 for images and analysis of all three paintings.

accord and as a free woman. In Cortona's painting, Neoptolemus is gripping her upper arm as he prepares to stab her with his dagger. The distinguished art-historian Donald Posner contextualizes this as follows:

In the seventeenth-century courage in women was most valued when it was inspired by loyalty to husbands, or by the demands of maidenly or wifely honor. When Sachetti and Cortona considered her story, therefore, they chose to disregard the evidence of the literary sources, and to conceive her fortitude, not as an active, "virile" virtue, but as the passive strength to suffer adversity and to accept the dictates of fate (and men). Cortona expressed it in a touching image showing the female heroine vulnerable in her nakedness and submissive in her posture.⁴⁹

Many artists follow Cortona in presenting Polyxena as passive victim. Others depict her resisting her sacrifice, as is the case in the bronze sculpture, *Neoptolemus and Polyxena*, by Giuseppe Piamoniti dating to ca. 1725 and now in the Art Institute of Chicago, in which a seated Polyxena struggles to push away the arm of Neoptolemus that brandishes the dagger. Almost invariably from the 17th century onwards, artists depict a partially naked Polyxena—indeed, recognition of the visual allure of this tableau is already present in Euripides' *Hecuba*, in which Talthybius describes how Polyxena "showed her breasts, lovely as a goddess' statue," (ll. 560–1). Perhaps the most famous sculptural representation is *Il Ratto di Polissena* ("The Abduction of Polyxena") by the Italian sculptor Pio Fedi from ca. 1866 that stands in the Loggia dei Lanzi overlooking the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. Carved from a single block of Carrara marble, this sculptural group shows Neoptolemus carrying off Polyxena in his left arm and looking back at Hecuba. She has flung herself at him, her left hand reaching up at him in supplication, her right hand desperately clinging to the thigh of her daughter. Neoptolemus' sword arm is raised aloft in the threat of violence; the body of Hecuba's son Polites, lying sprawled at her feet, a testimony to Neoptolemus' capacity for brutality.⁵⁰

49 Posner (1991) 404. Comparing Cortona's *Il sacrificio di Polissena* ("Sacrifice of Polyxena") to Guido Reni's *Il suicidio di Cleopatra* ("Suicide of Cleopatra"), Posner argues that the paintings' enthusiastic reception was in large part a factor of their eroticism and their ability "to engage the spectator's emotional response to a vision of sex, violence, and death. The nudity and passivity of the female victim, her surrender to the inevitable, and the "phallic" attack of snake or knife, dominate their iconographic design," (405).

50 Fedi's sculptural group forms an interesting pendant to Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine Women* of 1582, which stands at the other end of the loggia.

Music

Polyxena, Polydorus and Hecuba frequently feature in Italian and French musical theatre as titular protagonists, though the relation of these pieces to Euripides' *Hecuba* is usually indirect. Bongianni Gratarolo's *Polissena* ("Polyxena"), performed in Venice in 1589, draws on Seneca's *Troades*, but is presented by the author in his dedication to Sebastiano di Lodrone as the companion piece to his *Astianate* ("Astyanax"), a play influenced by both Euripides' *Trojan Women* and Seneca's *Troades*.⁵¹ Indeed, Gratarolo does not distinguish between Greek and Roman traditions, citing Aristotle's esteem for tragedy and the relative dearth of Italian adaptations of ancient tragedies as factors in his choice of genre. Italian *opera seria* of the 18th century frequently drew on the Trojan war for its subject-matter, with Achilles featuring especially prominently.⁵² Antonio Lotti's *Achille Placato* ("Achilles Appeased"), with libretto by Urbano Rizzi, premiered at the Teatro San Cassiano in Venice in 1707. Comic intermezzi were sung between the acts by buffo singers in what is a very early example of *opera buffa*, comic opera usually staging characters representing the common man. As their title, *Le Rovine di Troia* ("The Ruins of Troy"), indicates, they dealt with related subject-matter, but it was presented through invented characters: Dragontana, an old Trojan woman, and Policrone, a Greek soldier.⁵³

Eight years later, Lotti's *Polidoro*, with libretto by Agostino Piovene, was performed at the Teatro Santi Giovanni e Paolo as part of the 1715 carnival season.⁵⁴ This five-act work, which draws on the 1605 *Polidoro* by Pomponio Torelli (a leading political and literary figure in Parma) presents the version of the myth of Polydorus and Polymestor discussed earlier with regard to Pacuvius' *Iliona*. Iliona faces the impossible choice of deciding whether to reveal that she has passed off Deifilo (Deiphilus), her son by Polinestore (Polymestor), as Polidoro (Polydorus) and thereby save Deiphilus from death, or continue the deceit, thereby saving Polydorus from death and keeping her oath to Priam to protect his son. She chooses the latter course, and Deiphilus is sacrificed. His ghost appears to Polydorus demanding revenge on Polymestor. Polydorus reveals to Polymestor that he has killed his son, and Iliona explains her role in the deception, ascribing the death of Deiphilus to divine justice: "Ma il

51 The libretto for this and many of the other works under discussion are available online in their entirety through the Google Books Library Project.

52 For a definition of *opera seria*, see below, p. 158 n. 32.

53 Selfridge-Field (2007) 584; Bukofzer (1947) 244.

54 For the dating, see Selfridge-Field (2007) 320–1. For detailed analyses of this work, see Ketterer (2010) 153–5.

Cielo, il giusto Ciel fè, che cadesse il suo cieco furor sopra il tuo figlio. Paga la pena adesso, o iniquo, e piange a lagrime di sangue il tuo misfatto" ("But the heavens, the just heavens, made their blind fury fall on your son. So now pay the penalty, wicked one, and mourn your misdeed with tears of blood"). Polymestor laments having lost in one day his son, his treasure, and his kingdom. Pirro (Pyrrhus, i.e., Neoptolemus) arrives, and Polydorus announces that Troy is resurgent. When Pyrrhus reminds him, "il destino vostro è l'essere infelice" ("your destiny is to be unlucky"), Polydorus retorts: "Va' pur, non sempre avrem gli Dei nemici. Non sempre nemico è il Cielo del forte . . ." ("Be gone, we will not always have the gods against us, not always are the heavens enemy to the brave"). Thus by focusing on the successful revenge and overthrow of the tyrant Polymestor, even this tragic story receives the *lieto fine* or happy ending characteristic of *opera seria*. A free version of Piovene's *Polidoro* in German by Johann Samuel Müller, with music by German composer Carl Heinrich Graun, was premiered in 1726 at the court opera of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. It was Graun's first opera, and met with great acclaim.

In the *Ecuba* ("Hecuba") composed by Ignazio Celoniat, with libretto by Jacopo Durandi, and performed in the Regio Teatro in Torino in 1769, the fates of Polyxena and Polydorus are jointly presented, as they are in Euripides' *Hecuba*, but receive a quite different treatment. Pirro (Pyrrhus) falls in love with Polissena (Polyxena) and opposes Ulisse (Ulysses) in his call for her sacrifice. Polydorus (here called Olinto) becomes aware of the treacherous intentions of Polymestor (called Adrasto) and escapes, revealing himself to Ecuba (Hecuba) in a recognition scene in which he promises to bring Polyxena to her safe and sound. Olynthus and Pyrrhus rescue Polyxena, Adrastus is killed, and Pyrrhus grants Olynthus the kingdom of Thrace, sending Ulysses packing to the adulation of Hecuba, Polyxena and Olynthus. The themes of treachery and loyalty, so central to Euripides' play, are foregrounded in a three-act drama with more intrigue and plot twists than any other treatment of this subject matter.

The sacrifice of Polyxena receives unusual treatment in a work by Giovan Giuseppe Giron titled *La Polissena* ("Polyxena") from 1745 and identified as a "tragicomico melodrama per musica" ("tragicomic play set to music"). Its list of characters intimates that the vicissitudes of love are a focus of the play: Pirro is introduced as "lover and then husband of Polissena", who in turn is listed as "lover and then wife of Pirro". Elena (Helen) is presented as "widow of King Menelaus . . . , unrequited lover of Pirro." And Antiope (Antiope) is announced as a "Greek captain and unappreciated lover of Elena". In his first exchange with Helen, Pyrrhus wishes that she, not Polyxena, were the one to be sacrificed, while Helen in her subsequent soliloquy declares her love for Pyrrhus and her intention to make him fall in love with her. Helen reveals to a

crestfallen Antiope her love for Pyrrhus then asks him to convey her sentiments to the new object of her desire:

ELENA: Di a lui ch' Elena io sono e da Lui chiego amor, sia merto, o dono.

ANTIOPE: Ma i miei . . .

ELENA: Troppo ti avvanzi.

ANTIOPE: Ma tu il Padre ingannasti.

ELENA: Dilli, ch'Elena sono, e tanto basti.

HELEN: Tell him that I am Helen and am asking for his love, whether earned or as a gift.

ANTIOPUS: But what about my . . .

HELEN: You are getting ahead of yourself.

ANTIOPUS: But you betrayed his father.

HELEN: Tell him I am Helen, and that is enough.

Pyrrhus, for his part, is moved by Polyxena's love, resolve, and faithfulness in adversity and is unable to follow through with her sacrifice despite her encouragement. Later, Hecuba upbraids her daughter for loving Pyrrhus, her father's brutal murderer. As Polyxena is about to commit suicide, Pyrrhus intervenes, but Polyxena departs, remarking that "non manca un ferro a chi vuol morte" ("there is no shortage of weapons for the one who desires death"). When Helen bristles at Pyrrhus' request that she comfort Polyxena, Pyrrhus replies, "Gli fidi affetti miei per mill' Elene allor non cambierei" ("I will not change my loyal affections, not for a thousand Helens"). In a soliloquy, Helen declares her intention to ensure that the Greeks kill Polyxena. Agamemnone (Agamemnon) is aghast at Hecuba's revelation that Polyxena intends to commit suicide, as this will deprive Achilles of his intended victim. Antiope and his retinue lead Polyxena away, with Pyrrhus in pursuit, but threats to kill Polyxena keep Pyrrhus at bay. As the guards prepare to take Polyxena to sacrifice, Helen once again rejects Antiope's declarations of love; she then muses about unrequited love. Pyrrhus tells Agamemnon that he will assent to Polyxena's sacrifice, but wants to marry her first. In the presence of Agamemnon, Helen, Hecuba and Polyxena, Pyrrhus calls on the ghost of his father to witness their marriage. In the closing sequence of the piece, the servants bind Polyxena as they place a knife in Pyrrhus' hand.

The love interest between Pyrrhus and Polyxena is the subject of a number of other works. So, for example, Antoine Dauvergne composed a *Polyxène* ("Polyxena") which was premiered at the Académie Royale de Musique in Paris in 1763, with a libretto by Nicolas-René Joliveau, in which Hecuba opposes

Pyrrhus' desire to marry her daughter and tries to get Telephus, his rival suitor, to kill him, then turns on Telephus when he refuses and ultimately agrees to the marriage of Pyrrhus and Polxyena. It is a variant of the earlier tradition found in the 12th century *Le Roman de Troie* ("The Romance of Troy") of Benoît de Sainte-Maure in which Achilles falls in love with Polyxena and tries to negotiate a marriage with her, but is killed by Paris in an ambush orchestrated by Hecuba.

Achilles' love for Polyxena is the subject-matter for the five-act *tragédie en musique* ("musical tragedy") *Achille et Polyxène* ("Achilles and Polyxena"), composed by Pascal Colasse to a libretto by Jean Galbert Campistron and performed at the Académie Royale in 1687; Colasse, a student of the great Jean-Baptiste Lully, completed the work that Lully had left unfinished at his death earlier that year. The first two acts adapt Homer's *Iliad*. Priam makes his appeal to Achilles for the return of Hector's body, accompanied by Andromache and Polxyena. Polyxena's is the third and decisive appeal. "Que peut-on refuser au pouvoir de vos yeux?" ("What can one refuse the power of your eyes?") is Achilles' response. The plot thickens, however, when Agamemnon returns Briseis to Achilles. Briseis is perplexed by Achilles' reaction: "Quel triste accueil, Dieux! qu'est-ce que je vois? Suis-je encor Briseis? N'êtes-vous plus Achille?" ("Gods, what a sad reception! What do I see? Am I still Briseis? Are you Achilles no more?"). Briseis rounds on Achilles for his infidelity, and warns him of her imminent death; Achilles assures her that he suffers as much as she, and blames Fate and Love. The influence of Virgil's *Aeneid* continues to be felt as Briseis appeals to Juno (Hera) to thwart the marriage; Juno sends down Hatred, Fury, Discord and Envy. Polyxena, torn between loyalty to her brother whom Achilles killed and her love for Achilles, gives in to the consuming flames of love. The wedding ceremony is set to begin; thinking that Juno has deserted her, Briseis hastens to prevent it, but arrives to find the chorus of Greeks fleeing the temple as they exclaim that Achilles has been killed by Paris. Briseis calls on the Greeks to avenge his death; a distraught Polyxena, hearing Achilles calling her from beyond the grave, commits suicide, sacrificing herself for him.

The inner turmoil of Polyxena, torn between love for Pyrrhus and filial piety for Priam, is also a focus of *Polissena* by Italian poet and playwright Giovanni-Battista Niccolini, performed in 1810. In the final scene, Hecuba pleads in vain that she may supplant Polyxena as the sacrificial victim, as she does in Euripides' *Hecuba*, but before the Greeks are able to carry out her sacrifice, Polyxena kills herself with Pyrrhus' sword. Thus the motif of fateful love is dominant in the operatic tradition, eclipsing the brutality and revenge that dominate Euripides' *Hecuba*. Indeed, *Polissena* is the name given to the wife of Tiridates in Francesco Gasparini's *L'Amor Tirannico* ("The Tyrannical Love"),

with libretto by Domenico Lalli (1710 premiere in Venice): Polyxena is spurned by her husband Tiridates, who has fallen in love with Zenobia, the wife of Rhadmisthos, king of Thrace. Lalli's libretto was a source for the *Radamasto* by the German-born baroque composer Georg Friedrich Händel, first performed at the King's Theatre in London in 1720, with libretto by Nicolas Francesco Haym. Haym's Polyxena, like her namesake in Euripides' *Hecuba*, repeatedly shows herself willing to sacrifice herself for the good of others, as here when she pleads with her husband Tiridates: "Laß' mir den Bruder und Vater, und wenn du Blut willst, nimm denn, o nimm das meine" ("Grant me the brother and father, and, if you desire blood, take then, o take mine").

During the Napoleonic era, French opera had an increased influence on its Italian counterpart. A key example of this is *Hécube*, composed by Georges Granges de Fontenelle (1800) to a libretto by Jean-Baptiste Gabriel Marie de Milcent and first performed at the Théâtre des Arts in Paris. It enjoyed great success, with 42 performances between 1800 and 1808; this led to its translation by Giovanni Federico Schmidt, set to music by Nicola Antonio Manfroce, premiering at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples in 1812.⁵⁵ The Italian version was presented at the court of King Gioacchino Murat as a literal translation of Milcent's original, with the French published on the facing page and a footnote justifying the few departures from the original.⁵⁶ In this three-act opera, Polyxena's love for Achilles runs up against Hecuba's desire for revenge. After Polyxena has declared her love for Achilles and their marriage has been sanctioned by Priam as a means to end the war, Hecuba inveighs on her daughter to kill Achilles during their wedding. As an angst-ridden Polyxena stalls but is about to take her wedding vows, Antilochus, a Trojan nobleman, bursts in to report that the Greeks have broken the truce and entered Troy. Hecuba calls for revenge, and Achilles is lynched. The Greeks break into the temple, kill Priam and seize Polyxena, who is taken away to be sacrificed at Achilles' tomb, leaving Hecuba alone, cursing the Greeks. At the end, the stage scenery comes crashing down, revealing a profusion of pantomimed tableaux presenting the destruction of Troy: as Troy goes up in flames and piles of bodies lie on the ground, Trojan women supplicate as Hecuba hurls herself into the middle of the conflagration, pursued by Greek soldiers. The Trojan priest Panthus, Cassandra and Coroebus, Aeneas and his family all make their appearance against a backdrop of women dragged by their hair into slavery and fighting between Greeks and Trojans that builds to a crescendo until the curtain falls. Such closing

55 Jacobshagen (2000) 464.

56 Russo (2013) 82.

extravaganzas were a trait of French opera, here taken to a new level.⁵⁷ The interactions between French and Italian opera during this period were two-way. So, for example, the Italian composer Giovanni Paisiello was invited to Paris from Naples by Napoleon, and premiered his *Pirro* there in 1811.⁵⁸

In the 20th century, the Venetian composer Gian Francesco Malipiero composed the music for an *Ecuba* ("Hecuba") commissioned by the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico ("National Institute of Ancient Drama") and performed in 1939 in the Greek theatre at Syracuse, based on a translation of Euripides' play by Manlio Fagella.⁵⁹ He then converted it into a three-act *dramma lirico* ("lyric drama") that premiered in 1941 at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome. As has been noted, Malipiero's choice of classical subject-matter was a form of playing it safe after further performances of his *La Favola del Figlio Cambiato* ("The Fable of the Changed Child") had been banned by Mussolini because its libretto by the renowned writer Luigi Pirandello was considered subversive.⁶⁰ An opera titled *Ecuba* by Bruno Rigacci received its concert premiere in Rome in 1951 and its staged premiere in 2002 at Brooklyn College, New York, with the Brooklyn College Conservatory Orchestra.⁶¹ It treats the fates of Cassandra and Polyxena and their contrasting responses of wild resistance and stoic acquiescence.

Dance

Choral dance was integral to tragedy as originally performed in Athens. The French genre of *tragédie en musique*, discussed in the preceding section, had *divertissements* punctuating the acts, in which a chorus and a ballet troupe performed to music. Ballets were performed as interval pieces in some Italian operas too.⁶² The most prominent standalone dance piece related to Euripides' *Hecuba*, however, is *Cortege of Eagles* by the great American dancer and choreographer Martha Graham.⁶³ First performed in 1967, with Graham herself in the role of Hecuba, it presents, with both ferocity and compassion, the unraveling and revenge of Hecuba. First she relives the Troy's fall in a series of tableaux

57 Jacobshagen (2000) 466.

58 Mongredién (2008) 214–5. For Paisiello's *L'Andromaca*, see below, p. 162.

59 Sala (2000) 107–18.

60 Levi (2001) 43.

61 Brown (2004) 296.

62 The APGRD database lists a *Ballo di Greci* ("Dance of the Greeks") as interval entertainment for a 1769 *Ecuba*, and *La Caduta di Troia* ("The Fall of Troy") for a 1786 *Erifile* ("Eriphyle"), though such entr'actes were not as common in Italian opera as in French.

63 For a more detailed analysis, see Foley (2015) 80–1.

presented in cinematic fashion; these include a tender duet of Andromache and Hector, and the attempted abduction of Polyxena by Achilles. In a later scene, Polyxena kills herself with a weapon taken from the dead Achilles, whose body lies on stage. Just before Hecuba's blinding of Polymestor, her dead loved ones, Priam, Hector, Astyanax, Polyxena, and Polydorus appear as in ghostly procession. After her act of revenge, Hecuba tenderly cradles the brooch that served as her weapon, then leads the blind Polymestor by the hand to the body of Polydorus and forces him to touch his dead victim. The mood is bleak, the piece haunted by the ferryman Charon who appears to claim his due. Much of the meaning is conveyed by the extensive props designed by Isamu Noguchi, with whom Graham collaborated extensively.

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Graecum est, non legitur ("it is in Greek, it is not read") is a marginal note frequently found in manuscripts of the Middle Ages, when Seneca, not Euripides, was the ancient playwright through which Hecuba's travails were known. Although Seneca's popularity continued, the situation changed with the Renaissance rediscovery of Greek texts. In 1503, the Aldine Press in Venice published the *editio princeps* of eighteen plays of Euripides (all but his *Electra*). Three years later in 1506, Giorgio Anselmo published a Latin translation of *Hecuba* in Parma, dedicated to the poet Baldassarre Molossi, whom Anselmo identifies as a descendant of Molossus, son of Pyrrhus. That same year, a more faithful translation in Latin by the great Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus, was published by Badius in Paris, then later by Aldius in 1507, quickly achieving wide circulation. The first documented Renaissance performances of *Hecuba* quickly followed, at Leuven sometime between 1506 and 1514, and again in Wittenberg in 1525, both directed by the precocious German scholar and theologian Philip Melanchthon, who also lectured on the play at Wittenberg in 1525 or 1526.⁶⁴

The early interest in *Hecuba* by Renaissance humanists should come as no surprise given its privileged position as the first play in the 'Byzantine triad' of *Hecuba*, *Orestes*, and *Phoenician Women*, plays selected (ca. 500 AD) for study in schools, probably because of the perceived educational value of their many aphorisms,

64 Pollard (2012) 1064 provides statistics for *Hecuba*'s preeminence as "by far the most popular of the Greek plays printed, translated, and performed in 16th-century Europe." For the play's reception and popularity in the Renaissance, see also Heath (2003) and Mossman (1995) 220–5.

and their polished rhetoric and emphasis on the power of persuasion, resulting in more manuscript exemplars and a richer accretion of *scholia* (marginal comments). But it also suited the tastes of readers brought up on Senecan tragedy, with its intense mix of emotion, explicit violence, and high rhetoric.⁶⁵ In his 1562 edition of Euripides' plays, with Latin translation and notes accompanying the Greek text, Carl Stiblin declares that *Hecuba* "iure principem locum tenet" ("deservedly occupies the first place"), citing its "subject-matter's variety" and "more than tragic atrocity" as grounds for this privileged position.⁶⁶ Stiblin then expounds at considerable length how Hecuba serves as a cautionary example of human fragility through her sudden and abject fall from great fortune to extreme misery and as a warning of the fickleness of fortune. He draws further moral lessons from the flattering demagoguery of Odysseus, the punishment of Polymestor, and Hecuba's patient caution in carrying her revenge, while Polyxena's sacrifice to Achilles' shade is an example of how "states should honor the memory of outstanding men," especially those who have died in the service of their country, so that others may emulate their acts in the hope of similar glory, and the "readiness and eagerness for death in this girl is a sign of a noble character and a great spirit."

Most of the early productions of Greek tragedy in northern Europe were university or school productions, either in the original language or in a Latin translation. In the 18th century, versions in vernacular languages began to be performed in public theatres, and women began to attend in greater numbers, leading to the "feminization of drama"⁶⁷ at the same time as female actors were taking to the stage, gaining a following, and engendering larger female roles. The prominent parts given to female characters helps explain the relative popularity of some of Euripides' plays; but these were also adapted to suit contemporary tastes for sentimentality, feminine modesty and virtue. The 1726 production of *Hecuba* at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane translated and staged by Richard West, lawyer and Lord Chancellor of Ireland, failed dismally, an anonymous critic faulting it for being "not only a close Translation, but a very bare one too."⁶⁸

65 Erasmus in the dedicatory introduction of his *Hecuba* describes Euripides as a playwright "qui in tractandis locis rhetoricis tam creber sit, tam acutus, ut passim declamare videatur," ("who so frequently and skillfully handles rhetorical set pieces that he seems always to be declaiming"); see Mossman (1995) 221–3.

66 Heath (2003) 224–30. See also Mossman (1995) 230–5.

67 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 78.

68 This point is made by Hall/Macintosh (2005) 98. See also Hall (2000) 70–1, and Kenward (2011) 340–3.

A later adaptation by John Delap, also performed at the Drury Lane theatre, in 1761, attempted to cater to contemporary tastes.⁶⁹ Polydorus, going by the alibi Eriphilus, returns to rescue his fellow Trojans. Meeting his sister Polyxena, he feels compassion for her but keeps his identity secret. When Polyxena is told of her impending fate, she cautions her mother, “Oh Hecuba, let not thy rage provoke a potent victor!” Hecuba accedes: “No, I will not provoke a potent victor. I’ll check these foolish transports of despair. See, my rage melts to miserable tears.” Hecuba repeatedly shows self-restraint. When Polydorus’ accomplice, going by the alibi Melanthus, reveals himself to Hecuba as Eriphilus’ guardian Eumelus (a play, no doubt, on the names of the pendant characters in Homer’s *Odyssey* of Melanthius and Eumaeus), Hecuba assures him that she will not give anything away to Polymestor: “Fear me not. Piercing as his eyes are, they cannot dive into my soul.” But Polyxena is captured and sacrificed. When Polydorus hears the news, he is overwhelmed by compassion, and bids Eumelus kill him. But he begs him to first tell all, “that her last words may sink into my soul; that her last look may languish in my eyes.” When Ulysses discovers his identity, Polydorus chooses to commit suicide as Hecuba faints. She then calls on her attendants to help her carry the bodies of her daughter and son to the Greeks as she contemplates her own death. In her final lines, she gives a mere hint of the act of revenge that dominates the second half of Euripides’ play but is omitted from Delap’s expurgated version: “But soft, revenge—revenge! . . . Come, follow, follow: let’s do the noble deed!”⁷⁰

The prominent Dutch patriot Samuel Iperuszoon Wiselius wrote his tragedy *Polydorus* as a platform for protest against Napoleon’s annexation of the Netherlands.⁷¹ It drew on the versions of Euripides, Virgil, Ovid, Hyginus, Pacuvius, and Accius, as he indicates in his learned preface. The first version, printed in 1813 but never distributed, slipped through the censors, though certain offending passages were cut. After the French withdrawal in 1813, Wiselius published an uncensored version in March 1814, one month before Napoleon’s abdication, criticizing what the French censors had done to his previous version in an addendum to the preface, and then produced a third yet more extreme edition in 1819. His Polymestor is a tyrant characterized by greed, hypocrisy, and bloodlust, whose cruelty has converted his country into

69 See Hall (2000) 64–5; Hall/Macintosh (2005) 64; Kenward (2011) 333, 349–50.

70 Cranstoun Metcalfe’s *Hecuba à la Mode; or, The Wily Greek and the Modest Maid*, subtitled *An Entirely New and Classical Burlesque*, performed in 1893 at Vestry Hall in Anerley, London, also excluded Hecuba’s revenge.

71 Jensen (2014) provides a detailed analysis of Wiselius’ work as an act of resistance and indictment of the Napoleonic regime; this paragraph draws heavily on her study.

a wasteland. Wiselius follows the popular plot variant, first found in Pacuvius' *Iliona*, in which Polymestor kills his own son Deiphilus under the misapprehension that he is Polydorus. In this version, which Wiselius accessed via Hyginus' *Fabulae*, even Polymestor's wife Iliona views him as a tyrant, and veiled allusions to contemporary injustices abound. There is no evidence, to my knowledge, that Wiselius' play was staged.

Despite the wave of interest that the field of classics in general and Euripides in particular was enjoying in the early 20th century, with Gilbert Murray's translations bringing Euripides to a broader audience, *Hecuba* continued to be largely ignored or faulted, and its few performances largely restricted to college and university campuses or performances in ancient theatres. This has begun to change in recent years. A spate of productions in Greece in the 1980s was followed by an assortment of stagings across Europe and North America, with a surge in the early years of the Iraq war, when several high profile productions took place.⁷² Of these, the 2004 production at the Donmar Warehouse in London directed by Jonathan Kent, using a script by Frank McGuinness, was arguably the most celebrated. The program notes invited the audience to embrace the play's topicality, with references to Weapons of Mass Destruction and collusion by allied governments to the white-washing of violence, and to Lynndie England, one of the military personnel convicted of the torture of prisoners at Abu Grahیب earlier that year:

The awful impression grows, that when each of the dramatis personae in *Hecuba* come to write their memoirs (perhaps from Hades) no individual will believe that the offending judgment was theirs. Each will protest that he or she acted in good faith under pressure from others, or circumstances, or loyalty, or political alliance, or a sense of duty, or the unavenged dead.

72 Performances of *Hecuba* in 2004 included a production at the Donmar Warehouse in London (directed by Jonathan Kent), a production by Foursight Theatre (directed by Naomi Cooke) which toured England, as well as productions by Workshop 360 in Los Angeles (directed by L. Zane), and by Culture Project (directed by Alex Lippard) in New York, a staging at the Boston Center for the Arts (directed by John Ambrosino) of *The Memory of Salt*, an adaptation of *Hecuba* by Lisa Maurizio with Japanese Noh influences, and a production at sixth at Penn Theatre in San Diego (directed by Esther Emery); in 2005 the Royal Shakespeare Company's production (directed by Laurence Boswell) performed in London, Washington DC, New York, and Delphi. See Kenward (2005); Cousin (2007) 120–1, 125–8, 130–5; and Foley (2015) 86–90 for extensive analysis of the productions directed by Cooke, Kent, and Boswell, also offering assessments of the translations by Frank McGuinness and Tony Harrison that Kent and Boswell used respectively.

The performance opened with the names of war victims written on the wall in remembrance; at its end, Polymestor's two boys, dressed in the shorts and long socks of English prep-school pupils, are killed and dismembered by Hecuba and dumped into plastic bags, before she then buries her own children. Claire Higgins, who won an Olivier award for this performance, played the role of Hecuba "with restraint as well as rage;" instead of the usual Hecuba who unravels into madness, Higgins offered an interpretation in which Hecuba remains rational and confident that she has served justice on her aggressor.⁷³ As women increasingly enter the arena of armed conflict as combatants and suicide bombers, Euripides' *Hecuba* and its exploration of female violent responses to violence garners attention alongside his *Trojan Women* and its portrayal of women as victims of war.

Attempts to draw explicit connections to contemporary events can, however, draw resistance. Several reviews of the 2005 Royal Shakespeare Company production faulted it for heavy-handed references to the Iraq War, both in Tony Harrison's translation and in its staging (e.g., army tents labeled UK and US, and "a George Dubya accent" for Odysseus).⁷⁴ So too the premise presented in the program of the 1987 production at the Powerhouse Theater in Santa Monica directed by Lamis Khalaf drew criticism. In it, Khalaf, of Syro-Palestinian descent, invited the audience to imagine:

Suppose that the Greeks are Israelis, that the Trojans are Palestinians, that the Thracians are on of the clashing political factions in Lebanon . . . Suppose that the gods are the super powers (Europe—early in the century, the United States and the Soviet Union—now) . . . Now watch and hear the story that Euripides tells, the story of Hecuba . . .

This impulse to prime the audience is nothing new in theatre: Aristotle (*Poetics* 1461b) criticized the new wave of actors who "think the audience won't understand something unless they themselves convey it." To engage viewers is to allow them the space to respond, both cognitively and emotionally, to the plot for themselves. Praised by reviewers in this regard was the 1995 production of RO Theater in Rotterdam, directed by Peter de Baan, in which the staging's powerful visuals combined with rich character interpretations and a bleak yet sympathetic exploration of the human condition.⁷⁵

73 Stothard (2004).

74 Nilan (2005); Clapp (2005). For a range of assessments of the production, see Hartigan (1995) 140–1.

75 Verbeeten (1995); Goetsch (1995).

This is not to say that topicality is in itself a problem. Indeed, some of the most well-received stagings of *Hecuba* seem to be those in which its topics rub closest to the bone. So the 1995 and 1998 productions directed by the American theatre director and playwright Carey Elizabeth Perloff and starring Olympia Dukakis as Hecuba were notable in part because the play, and its chorus, a women's vocal ensemble (KITKA) specializing in Eastern European music, reminded its US audiences of the horrors of the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo respectively, in which the US had become enmeshed. Even more intense was the performance of *Hecuba* in war-torn Dubrovnik in summer 1991, directed by the Croatian theatre director Ivica Boban. The reviewer describes the chorus as speaking "with pointedly local accents" as they performed "while Dubrovnik was still under fire", and ends with the question, "How do you live in a seismic region?"⁷⁶ In the African Continuum Theater Company's 1998 staging of *Hecuba* in Washington DC, directed by Jennifer Nelson, the harmonic of slavery resonated strongly, with the incorporation of African-American spirituals clearly activating proximal associations.⁷⁷

Perhaps most interesting in this regard was the 1998 site-specific performance, *Hécuba*, on the island of Tabarca, a protected marine reserve, near Alicante, Spain, directed by Margarita Borja. Set in a desolate and cactus-ridden landscape that echoed the remoteness of the play's original setting on the Chersonese peninsula, its main stage action took place on the Torre de San Jose, a former prison and site of the summary execution in 1838 of 19 supporters of Carlos V. Its opening sequence presented the naked body of Polydorus displayed at the top of the tower as an ominous figure in black looked on. Over the course of the performance, its steps were stained with the blood of those killed as the wind carried off the laments of their loved ones.⁷⁸ Agamemnon's final words, ordering Polymestor dragged away, silenced and cast off on a desert island (Euripides, *Hecuba* 1282–6) resonated with the performance context.

Unlike many Greek tragedies which inspire set designs featuring grandiose palace facades, most performances of *Hecuba* are set against a barren backdrop, an emptiness rather than a structure. No monumental architecture here, just a bleak landscape with an internment camp, the tents or shacks housing the Trojan prisoners. On this stripped-down stage, the few stage properties present receive added attention. A reviewer remarked of the 1989 Shoestring *Ekave* ("Hecuba") in Oxford, directed by Dennis Douglas, "the stage pictures stayed in mind long after the words. One of the most telling, in a play soaked

⁷⁶ Johnson (1992).

⁷⁷ Kaufman (1998); Horwitz (1998); Foley (2015) 85–6.

⁷⁸ Galiana (1998).

in sea imagery, was the sight of Ekave kneeling beside a dead Polydorus created from ropes, sail and netting.”⁷⁹ The 1996 Oxford Classical Drama Society production by David Raeburn, performed in Greek, punctuated a bare stage with dead trees; in the foreground a simple altar, the focus of the stage action; in the background the large sails of the Greek ships.⁸⁰ The 2000 production, also in Greek, at Barnard College of Columbia University, New York, directed by Devon Harlow, used A-frame ladders scattered across the stage as a polyvalent stage device, representing the tents and serving as a platform from which characters spoke.

An effective marriage of set design and symbolism was achieved in the *Hecuba* performed in 2006 at the Experimental Theater Wing of New York University, directed by Magdalena Zira. The acting took place in front of make-shift tents, a patchwork of cardboard and tarpaulin that comprised the prison camp. On a wall hung photos of loved ones dead or missing in action. These Hecuba addressed, barefoot and wearing a simple smock and pantaloons indistinguishable from those of her daughter and fellow prisoners. Odysseus, clad in a great coat with its collar turned up, remained aloof, but for flashes of violence, such as when he grabbed Hecuba by the cheeks or snatched the photos from the wall and ripped them up, exclaiming “we also have lost!” At the center of the backdrop of the large acting space, a wide and steep stepped ramp rose up instead of a *skene* door, down which the male characters strode and up which they subsequently disappeared, closing off access behind them with a chain, while the women emerged from their shacks arrayed on one side, off kilter, stooping to enter and exit. When Agamemnon entered in an immaculate white suit with Nehru jacket, the chorus punctuated Hecuba’s outbursts by dashing stones against each other in percussive unison, providing a startling score for her rage and a foreshadowing of their active participation. The ghost of Polydorus observed as his sister was sacrificed on a wooden crate.

The gendering of violence is a key interest of *Hecuba*. After being a victim of male violence for much of the play, Hecuba ends up reversing the roles, assuming the role of avenger (as Electra fantasizes doing in Sophocles’ play) only after her last male relative, Polydorus, is killed. In ancient drama, an all-male cast played all parts, including the chorus. The 2004 touring production by Foursight Theatre, directed by the British artistic director Naomi Cooke, reversed ancient practice with its all-female cast. Each of the six chorus women also played a character role, carrying out their costume changes on stage. Having female actors playing male characters added an interesting

79 Ranger (1989).

80 Bardel (1996).

overlay, especially to the dismissive comments of Agamemnon (“And how will *women* overpower men?” l. 883; “But I have not much regard for women” l. 885) and the outraged and pained outbursts of Polymestor (“I have been ruined by *women*!” l. 1095), whose earlier coarse male braggadocio had been masterfully conveyed by Adi Lerer. In the director’s notes, Naomi Cooke explains that the women of the play, played by a multicultural cast, “carry the historical and global accumulation of injustices wrought on all.” Some of these women are seen on stage; but there are other, unseen women. It is they who carry out the killings and the blinding off stage, not Hecuba or the chorus members. The audience experiences their presence through a superimposed recorded soundtrack of female voices. Their whispers are first heard as Hecuba proposes her revenge to Agamemnon, as if the impulse for this terrible act comes from an outside source, and swell to a riotous crescendo at the moment of violence.⁸¹

In Athenian tragedy, three male actors played all the speaking character roles, and the deuteragonist and tritagonist took on multiple roles. This tradition, albeit now with female actors alongside male, is continued in the regular masked performances at Randolph College. In the 2010 Randolph Greek Play production of *Hecuba*, directed by Amy Cohen, the actress playing Polyxena (Laura Shearer) also played Talthybius, who describes the killing of Polyxena in his messenger speech. This doubling added another level of complexity and poignancy to the reporting of her dying words and recreation of her final acts.⁸² A 2010 production of John Harrison’s translation by the Open Stage Company directed by Harrison himself and performed at the Stahl Theatre, Oundle and the Auden Theatre, Holt in the UK, had the spirits of the

81 Dorinda Hulton, dramaturg for the production, makes this connection explicit in her notes to the company, which are included in the DVD of the production available through www.arts-archives.org: “The Unseen Women are the accomplices of Hecuba and perpetrators of violence. Perhaps as ‘characters’ they could be associated with the ‘spirit’ (721) that the Chorus speak of, which bears down on Hecuba. This spirit is possibly the same as the one Hecuba calls the ‘avenging fiend’ that inspires her lamentation when she sees her dead son. Perhaps, also, the entry of the ‘avenging fiend’ into Hecuba (721) could be a way of understanding the radical transformation in her character between that of a grieving mother into that of a woman capable of wreaking indiscriminate vengeance upon both the guilty and the innocent.”

82 The doubling of parts in Athenian tragedy and in her reperformances of it was the subject of a paper by Amy Cohen (“Doubling in Practice and Pedagogy”) at the 2015 Society for Classical Studies conference, in which she used her *Hecuba* production as a case study and made this point. The script by Jay Kardan and Laura-Gray Street, and videos of the performance, keynote lecture by Kenneth Reckford, and talkback led by Mary-Kay Gamel are available online in volume 8 of *Didaskalia*, www.didaskalia.net/issues/8/index.html.

dead Polydorus and Polyxena represented musically by the off-stage singing of professional vocalists.

Not surprisingly, *Hecuba* has been performed alongside *Trojan Women*, as in the 1996 production by the St Louis Shakespeare Company directed by Donna Northcott. New plays drawing on the two have also been composed.⁸³ *Trojan Barbie*, by the Australian playwright Christine Evans, was premiered at the American Repertory Theatre in Boston in 2009, and garnered Evans several awards. Lotte, an English tourist visiting the site of Troy on a singles tour who by profession repairs dolls, finds herself trapped in the Greek prisoner of war camp alongside Hecuba, Polly X (also known as Polly Xena), Cassandra and Andromache. Her outrage at her mistreatment provides a modern viewpoint on the events unfolding.⁸⁴ Polly X is a rebellious and ingenuous teenager who decries her mother's defeatism and wants to make modern art out of dismembered Barbie dolls. Talthybius skirts around Polly X's fate as he tells her mother "Polly X is . . . taken care of. Her problems are over; she's—she'll be an attendant. In the Achilles museum gift shop."⁸⁵ En route to her sacrifice, Polly X is taken on a detour by her two guards to the abandoned zoo. Tension mounts as they ply her with beer and play with her in a scene in which, not unlike Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, the human characters' impulses and emotions are projected onto the zoo's mangy and ravenous tiger, while Polly X innocently makes a necklace out of beer bottle tops. Her death is later reported by Andromache, a squalid vignette in which the drunken teenager "tore her shirt open to the waist stretched up, bare breasted" and yelled a defiant obscenity at her violators (Euripides, *Hecuba* 548–9, 558–60).⁸⁶ At the end of the play, Lotte, back home safe and sound, encounters Hecuba as a baglady searching for her baby Astyanax: "I followed the trail! I survived the desert, then the sea. I clawed my way up the mast and howled like a dog for my babies . . . I refuse to die, before I've buried them. GIVE ME MY CHILDREN'S BODIES!"⁸⁷ The play closes as Polly X, in a nightmarish tableau dismissed by the modern characters in the play as

83 These include *After Troy* by Glynn Maxwell, a former student of Derek Walcott. *After Troy* premiered at the Oxford Playhouse in 2011 in a touring production by the Lifeblood Theatre Company directed by Alex Clifton.

84 As Amy Seham writes (in the director's notes for her 2013 production at Gustavus Adolphus College, Saint Peter, Minnesota), "Lotte's naiveté helps us see the distance we put between ourselves and the victims of distant wars, and our ignorance of the human cost of conflict."

85 Evans (2010) 20.

86 Evans (2010) 53.

87 Evans (2010) 66.

the delusions of Hecuba's deranged mind, climbs onto the installation artwork in the shape of a heart that she has constructed out of dismembered doll parts, and is executed by her captors. Thus Euripides' *Hecuba* informs *Trojan Barbie*, but its primary inspiration remains his *Trojan Women* and its portrayal of women as victims, and it omits any reference to their capacity for violent retaliation.

Screen

To my knowledge, there is no cinematic adaptation of Euripides' *Hecuba*.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Hecuba*

Hecuba has been relatively well served by reception studies, at least in certain areas. Heath's (2003, first published in 1987) groundbreaking and influential article traces the history of the changing assessments of the play; it discusses a wide range of evidence to provide a contextual explanation for the play's early appeal and its neglect or negative assessment since the 17th century. Mossman (1995: 220–48) and Matthiessen (2010: 59–71) further develop this line of investigation in their book-length studies of the play. The most detailed analysis of the reception of Hecuba as a character in England is Kenward's PhD thesis (2011), not yet published, which examines a variety of contexts from the 12th century to the present, including pre-humanist traditions about the Trojan war and their later intersection with the newly imported classical texts, the problematization of public lament, banned in Reformation England, through to anti-war productions of the modern age.

Foley's (2015) newly published book in Bloomsbury's *Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy* series offers an accessible and wide-ranging analysis of the play, with considerable attention to its reception in classical literature and art and its performance history. It includes a timeline that lists stage versions of the play from the sixteenth century to the present. The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama at the University of Oxford provides an invaluable resource for the study of stage productions, housing a wealth of materials including playbills, programs, reviews, and a library of performance-related books.

The reception of *Hecuba* in music is an area that has received little attention despite its large if indirect footprint in Italian and French opera. So too its post-classical reception in the visual arts has not been adequately covered, though entries in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* offer good coverage of ancient representations of Hecuba, Polyxena and Polydorus, and

individual works from the classical period have received detailed study. An indispensable gateway into the post-classical afterlife of the play is provided by Reid's *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300s–1990s* (1993), which provides chronologically arranged listings, by character (Polydorus, Polyxena) of their appearances in all art forms.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

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Andromache

James H. Kim On Chong-Gossard

The Andromache combines two myths from the aftermath of the Trojan war: one concerning Hector's widow Andromache, her life as the concubine of Achilles' son Neoptolemus (Latin 'Pyrrhus'), and her eventual marriage to her former brother-in-law Helenus and settlement in Epirus; and the other about Neoptolemus' marriage to Hermione (the daughter of Menelaus and Helen) and his murder by Orestes, to whom Hermione had originally been betrothed. The two stories are intertwined in Euripides' play with the added plot of Hermione and Menelaus attempting to kill Andromache and her illegitimate son by Neoptolemus (though unnamed in the play, this son is often referred to by scholars as "Molossus"). The title role actually disappears mid-way through the play, rescued from death by Neoptolemus' grandfather Peleus.

The reception of Andromache is as broad and varied as that of any of Euripides' plays, and French drama and Italian baroque opera in particular retold and refashioned the myths of the Andromache-Neoptolemus-Hermione-Orestes tetrad in a surprising number of variations.

There are some key plot features that stand out in Euripides' version, which are significant in assessing its reception:

- *Neoptolemus is married to Hermione, but Andromache is his concubine;*
- *A salacious catfight occurs between the female rivals, Andromache and Hermione, in front of a chorus of women;*
- *Various characters reiterate the belief that a man should not have sexual relations with two women at the same time. The chorus women's thoughts on the subject express this concisely: "I will never praise double marriages among mortals, nor sons by different mothers; it causes strife and hostile pains for a house" (Andromache 465–8).*
- *When Andromache is threatened by Menelaus, it is her love for her son (whose life is also threatened) that convinces her to yield to his demands;*
- *Hermione has a famous breast-baring panic scene, in dialogue with her Nurse;*
- *Neoptolemus is absent from the entire play (like Creon's daughter in Medea, and Aegisthus in Euripides' Electra), and his corpse is carried in only at the end for lamentation by his grandfather Peleus;*

- *Neoptolemus is murdered off-stage (and in Delphi) by henchmen of Orestes, who plotted his murder out of jealousy for Hermione, with whom Orestes elopes. It is noteworthy that Hermione asks Orestes to help her, but at the same time Orestes had already laid a plot to eliminate her husband even before meeting her;*
- *Peleus and Thetis (Neoptolemus' grandparents) and Menelaus all make brief appearances;*
- *The play ends with a prediction of Andromache's marriage to Helenus, their relocation to Molossia (in Epirus, at the modern border between Albania and Greece), and of her son by Neoptolemus as a future king.*

In Literature

Scholars have noted that Euripides' *Andromache* is itself an example of the reception of Sophocles, whose *Hermione* (now fragmentary) preceded Euripides' *Andromache* by an unknown number of years. Most agree that the Sophoclean drama focused on Orestes' murder of Neoptolemus so that Orestes could marry Hermione; the play apparently included a chorus of Phthian women, and a scene in which Peleus lamented over his grandson's body.¹ It has been argued that Euripides, in composing the *Andromache*, engaged in a "meta-poetic" rivalry with Sophocles by repeating these basic elements and then adding the additional plot of Hermione trying to kill her husband's concubine and their bastard son.² In this way, Euripides created the dramatic incentive for the argument between rival women in the same household, which remains one of the most memorable scenes of the play.

The first surviving instance of the reception of Euripides' *Andromache* in literature occurs four centuries after it was first performed. In Book 3 of Vergil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas narrates how he and his Trojan refugees were travelling by the coast of Epirus and heard a rumor that Priam's son Helenus was still alive, had married Andromache, and had succeeded to the throne of Achilles' son Pyrrhus (Greek Neoptolemus). They land at Buthrotum and investigate, only to find Andromache herself making offerings at altars in Hector's name. Andromache is astonished to see Aeneas alive. In the course of conversation Aeneas asks whether she is still Pyrrhus' concubine (*Aeneid* 3. 319), giving her the opportunity to relate the details of her life since the fall of Troy:

1 Sommerstein/Fitzpatrick/Talbot (2006) 1–40.

2 Torrance (2013) 193.

After our fatherland was burned, as we were carried across the many seas, we endured the insolence and youthful pride of Achilles' son, bearing him a son in our captivity; then after he pursued Leda's granddaughter Hermione and a Spartan marriage, he handed me, his slave, over to another slave, Helenus, for keeping. But Orestes, inflamed with great love for the bride that was stolen from him, and harassed by the Furies for his crimes, caught Neoptolemus unawares and slew him at his father's altar. Upon Neoptolemus' death, part of his kingdom passed to Helenus.

(VERGIL, *Aeneid* 3. 325–34).³

The discovery of Andromache in Epirus serves an important function in Aeneas' journey, as a reassurance that he and his followers are not the only survivors of Troy, and that their mission to found a new homeland has actually been achieved by others, namely Hector's widow and brother. Epirus is also a counter-example for Aeneas; whereas Andromache and Helenus have recreated Troy by imposing Trojan place-names and architectural features upon a Greek landscape, Aeneas' mission is not to reduplicate Troy, but to create a new society which the reader knows will eventually become the ancestors of the Romans. Furthermore, Aeneas' Trojan refugees remember all too well the night that Troy fell, and it is in this context that the events of Euripides' *Andromache* are revealed. Books 2 and 3 of the *Aeneid* form a narrative delivered by Aeneas to Queen Dido of Carthage, and thus an audience (whether that is Dido, or Aeneas' comrades, or the reader) finds satisfaction in learning that Neoptolemus/Pyrhus—the very man who slew king Priam at the altar of the Trojan palace—was himself slain by Orestes *patrias ad aras* (“at his father's altar,” *Aeneid* 3. 319, certainly a reference to an altar dedicated to Achilles at Delphi), and he was slain for the sake of Helen's daughter. Pyrhus' helmet, with its plume and crest, is even among the gifts which Helenus gives to Aeneas and his company when they depart from Epirus (*Aeneid* 3. 468–9); it is surely an eerie talisman that reminds its new owner both of the cruelty of the sacker of Troy, and his inglorious demise.

Another Augustan writer, the mythographer Hyginus (67 BC–17 AD), gave his own brief summary of the story of Andromache and Neoptolemus:

(*NEOPTOLEMUS*) The son of Achilles and Deidamia was the father of Amphialus by his captive woman Andromache, the daughter of Eetion. But after he heard that Hermione, his fiancée, had been given in marriage to Orestes, he came to Sparta and demanded his fiancée from Menelaus.

3 All translations of Latin, ancient Greek, French and Italian are my own.

He was unwilling to break his promise to him, and he divorced Hermione from Orestes and gave her to Neoptolemus. Having received such an insult, Orestes killed Neoptolemus as he was sacrificing at Delphi, and he got Hermione back.

(HYGINUS, *Fabulae* 123. 1–2)

Vergil and Hyginus each have their own variations of the Pyrrhus-Hermione-Orestes love triangle which, as we shall see, dominates the reception of Euripides' *Andromache*. In Vergil, Orestes is *ereptae magno flammatus amore coniugis* ("inflamed with great love for his stolen wife," *Aeneid* 3. 330–1), asserting that Hermione was originally betrothed to him. But in Hyginus, Menelaus had betrothed his daughter to Neoptolemus first, then gave Hermione to Orestes in marriage, and then broke that union so that Hermione could marry her original fiancé, which Orestes took as an insult. The question of Hermione's affections and whom they first belonged to becomes, over time, one of the principal variations in retellings of the story. In Euripides' *Andromache*, Orestes reminds Hermione that she was originally 'his':

Although you were mine at first, you live with this man through the wickedness of your father, who, before attacking the borders of Troy, and even though he had given you to me as a wife, later promised you to the man who has you now if he would sack the city of Troy. [...] I'll teach him not to marry someone who is mine by right.

(EURIPIDES, *Andromache* 966–70, 1001)

It is in the nature of Euripidean drama that an audience need not take Orestes' words at face value. After all, Orestes is trying to seduce Hermione and has plotted to kill her husband even before coming to find her, so he needs to justify his motives; and the by-now-dead Neoptolemus conveniently cannot contradict him. Nonetheless, what Orestes leaves unspoken is that Menelaus the marriage-broker must have devised a bargain with Achilles' son that was straightforward in its patriarchal overtones: rescue my wife and you can marry our daughter. Hyginus' version, on the other hand, tells the complete opposite: it is Neoptolemus who was Hermione's original fiancé, and Menelaus reneged, until Neoptolemus complained; no mention is made of the sack of Troy. Nor is any mention made in Hyginus (or Vergil, for that matter) of Hermione's thoughts on the matter. In Euripides, Hermione's attitude towards being passed around between husbands is dismissive, as if she is worn out: "My father will concern himself with my marriage; it is not mine to judge this" (Euripides, *Andromache* 987–8). Yet it is precisely Hermione's desires and loyalties that

will become the focus of the reception of this myth in the 17th through 19th centuries.

Jumping ahead a few centuries, the 'medieval' reception (for lack of a better term) of Euripides' *Andromache* begins with another mythographical text, the curious late-4th-century *Ephemeris belli Troiani* ("Journal of the Trojan War") of Dictys Cretensis. This text claims to be a Latin translation by a certain Quintus Septimius of an earlier Greek chronicle written by a fictional Dictys of Crete, who in the narrative claims to have been an 'eye-witness' of Trojan war events. In *Ephemeris* 6. 12–3, the narrator explains how Neoptolemus, who had consummated his marriage with Hermione, went to Delphi and left Andromache behind with her surviving son by Hector, Laodamas. The narrative follows the plot of Euripides quite closely, with Hermione calling upon Menelaus to kill Andromache's son. But instead of Peleus coming to Andromache's rescue, Andromache herself escapes with the aid of the people of Thessaly, who are also barely prevented from killing Menelaus. Orestes sends scouts to Delphi to find Neoptolemus, but they are unable; Orestes searches for him himself, but the narrator does not mention the murder; instead he claims that everyone believed Orestes had killed him, which enabled Orestes to take away Hermione. Peleus and Thetis discover that Neoptolemus is indeed dead and has been buried at Delphi, but ascertain that Orestes had never found him. Then Peleus and Thetis send Andromache away to Molossia since she is pregnant with Neoptolemus' son.

These details are repeated centuries later in three medieval texts: the Old French poem *Le Roman de Troie* ("The Romance of Troy"), composed by a Benedictine monk, Benoît de Sainte-Maure, around 1165; the Latin prose chronicle *Historia destructionis Troiae* ("The History of the Destruction of Troy") written between 1272–1287 by Guido delle Colonne (also known as Guido de Columnis), an Italian writer living in Messina; and the Middle English poem *Troy Book* by the monk John Lydgate of Bury, composed between 1412–1420. Lydgate's poem was an amplified translation of Guido's chronicle, which was itself an abridged paraphrase of Benoît's poem. A summary of Guido's version of the Andromache myth will suffice here to illustrate all three texts.⁴ In Book 34 of his *Historia*, Guido begins his narration of the post-Trojan life of "Pirrus" by suggesting it will be an *exemplum* of the nature of fate: how the fates create blind snares for men who are settled in the greatest happiness, and cause men to fall from the high point of happiness into sudden ruin by convincing them

4 The sections relevant to the Andromache myth are Benoît, *Le Roman de Troie* 29. 595–29. 814; Constans (1908) 349–61; Guido, *Historia destructionis Troiae* Book 34; Griffin (1936) 267–9; and Lydgate, *Troy Book* 5. 2731–2867; Bergen (1908) 850–4.

that the very things that give birth to ruinous losses are, in fact, exceedingly pleasing. In Guido's version, Pyrrhus secretly abducts Hermione from her husband Orestes (who rules Mycenae), brings her to his own kingdom in Thessaly and marries her. Orestes does not have the forces to invade Pyrrhus' lands, but instead waits for an opportunity for revenge to present itself. When Pyrrhus heads to Delphi to confer with Apollo, Orestes accosts Pyrrhus there and kills him with his own hand.⁵ Guido's narrative expands even further on the details given in Dictys Cretensis, and he changes Hector's son's name from Laodamas to Laomedon:

Menelaus listened to the words of his daughter and hastened to Thessaly where, setting aside any shame belonging to his nobility, he rushed at Andromache. But Andromache suddenly took up her son Laomedon in her arms, and after slipping away in precipitous flight she directed herself into the streets, and there crying out loudly she begged in tears for the people's help against Menelaus, that the people not be convinced that she be killed with her young son.

(GUIDO, *Historia* 34)⁶

Peleus and Thetis once again send Andromache to Molossia where she bears Pyrrhus' son, named Achilleides by Benoît and Guido (instead of Hyginus' Amphialus). In time Achilleides grows up, and even though the kingdom of Thessaly is more his by right (as Pyrrhus' son), nonetheless he crowns his half-brother Laomedon (son of Hector) as the next king of Thessaly, and at the same time gives freedom in Greece to all the Trojan captives.

Guido's narrative is brief and to the point, focusing on a sequence of events with some morals to be learned, but with no concern for the 'characterization' that comes with drama. Even so, there are some variations to Euripides' plot in Guido's version that are significantly repeated in subsequent versions over the centuries: namely, (1) Andromache's son by Hector is still alive and living with her in Pyrrhus' palace (this occurs in Dictys Cretensis, Benoît, and Lydgate as well); (2) Pyrrhus is madly in love with Andromache—*Andromachae amore bachatus* ("possessed by love for Andromache," Guido, *Historia* 34)⁷—even though he at one time desired Hermione—*Hermionae ferventis amoris cupidine captus* ("captured by the desire of feverish love for Hermione," Guido,

5 Lydgate's *Troy Book* places Pyrrhus on the island of Delos rather than Delphi.

6 Griffin (1936) 268. Guido's book devoted to the Andromache myth (namely, book 34) has no subdivisions, so in these footnotes I will include the page number of Griffin's edition.

7 Griffin (1936) 268.

Historia 34);⁸ (3) Orestes kills Pyrrhus *manu propria* (“with his own hand,” Guido *Historia* 34).⁹

Three hundred years later, in the French Renaissance, the Pyrrhus-Hermione-Orestes love triangle was reshaped further, this time for performance. French humanist drama in the late 16th century was a fertile field for classical myth, and Euripides’ *Andromache* was not denied a place in providing the inspiration. Even so, Euripides’ plot was never replicated entirely, but merely provided the foundation for other dramatic aims—a Senecan rhetorical style, the display of passionate emotions, as well as the spectacle of gods and ghosts—which the playwrights of the time wished to pursue. *Pyrrhe* by the poet Luc Percheron (1592) tells the story of Hermione’s unhappy marriage with Pyrrhus and his murder by Orestes; Andromache and her son do not figure in the plot. Percheron’s play begins ingeniously with the goddess Diana in conversation with the ghost of Polyxena, whom Pyrrhus had ritually sacrificed when leaving Troy.¹⁰ In this way Pyrrhus’ eventual murder is understood by the audience not only as the outcome of Orestes’ jealousy, but also as the workings of divine justice for Pyrrhus’ crimes in the sack of Troy.¹¹ Orestes also arrives at Pyrrhus’ palace in disguise as an Egyptian, and his comrade Pylades falsely announces that Orestes is dead—in the same manner that Orestes’ death is feigned in Sophocles’ *Electra*—thus ensuring that he will not be recognized.¹² Pyrrhus has a dream foreshadowing his own death, Hermione recognizes her former lover, Orestes murders Pyrrhus off-stage, and Pyrrhus’ confidant—the aged Phoenix, tutor of Achilles—grandly commits suicide on-stage.

Jean Heudon’s *Pyrrhe* of 1598 takes the action of the love triangle even further. The play begins with Pyrrhus talking himself into single-combat with Orestes, with Hermione as the prize for the winner. Orestes wins the fight, and the lengthy remainder of the play (four entire acts) focuses on how Pyrrhus’ death (and corpse) is received by those who knew him. Orestes insults Pyrrhus’ corpse, but Hermione is so distraught by grief that she wants to blind Orestes’ eyes and tear out his heart. Elsewhere, Helenus reports Pyrrhus’ death to Andromache, who laments him bitterly even though Helenus is puzzled why she still feels so attached to him. Then Pyrrhus’ head, covered by a *crêpe*, is brought to his mother Deidamia, who faints, begs for someone

8 Griffin (1936) 267.

9 Griffin (1936) 268.

10 On Pyrrhus and the sacrifice of Polyxena, see above, pp. 55–7.

11 Karsenti (2008) 123.

12 Karsenti (2008) 127 notes that Sophocles’ *Electra* had been translated into French by Lazare de Baïf in 1537, so Luc Percheron would certainly have known it.

to avenge her son, and finally stabs herself. Her father, Lycomedes, then continues the lament; thus, as in Euripides' play, Pyrrhus is lamented by an aged grandfather, albeit his maternal one in Heudon's version.¹³

Across the channel, English drama in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods was similarly inspired by Senecan tragedy and the aesthetics of violent death on-stage. Although no English play at this time tackled the story of Euripides' *Andromache* for its entire subject, nonetheless mention should be made of Thomas Heywood's *Iron Age 2* from 1632, the last of a five-play sequence begun in 1611 and consisting of *The Golden Age*, *The Silver Age*, *The Brazen Age* and *The Iron Age* (in two parts). This series of plays strings together stories from the classical era. *Iron Age 2* is not a play specifically about Pyrrhus, but rather an enormous tapestry of myths stretching from the fall of Troy down to the murder of Agamemnon and its aftermath. Thersites (the Greek soldier derided by all in *Iliad 2*) and Synon (the Greek in *Aeneid 2* whose lies enabled the Trojan horse to be brought into the city) hang around in almost every scene as comic commentators. In Act 4, Agamemnon and Pyrrhus arrive in Mycenae together with Menelaus, Helen, Ulysses and Diomedes. They are met by Clytemnestra, Orestes, Electra, Hermione, Aegisthus, and Cethus (a brother of Palamedes who acts as an advisor to Orestes). Heywood's stage directions indicate that the characters gesture to each other "as strangers, but especially Pyrrhus [*sic*] and Orestes."¹⁴ Menelaus brings Hermione forward, announces that she was promised to Pyrrhus at Troy, and hands her over to him above Orestes' protests. This all happens even before Agamemnon is murdered; but as soon as Orestes has avenged him by killing Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, his desire to steal Hermione from Pyrrhus is cleverly woven into the madness that comes from his mother's furies:

ORESTES: I'll have a guard of Furies which shall light mee
 Unto my nuptiall bed with funerall Teades,
 The fatall sisters shall my hand-maides bee,
 And waite upon the faire Hermione.

CETHUS: Hermione? shee is betroth'd to Pyrrhus,

13 For further details on the plot, see Karsenti (2008) 123–5 and 129–31, and Lebègue (1952) 178. Karsenti has argued quite convincingly that both Percheron and Heudon's plays utilized the myth of Pyrrhus' murder for a political purpose. Only a couple of decades had passed since the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, and it is possible that the dramatization of Pyrrhus' murder in the 1590s could be, in Karsenti's words (2008: 119), "a symbolic gesture signifying the erasure of this traumatic past."

14 Heywood (1632) 71^r.

And (mourning for your absence) all the way
 Unto the Temple shee will strowe with tears.
 ORESTES: Ha? Pyrrhus rape my deare Hermione?
 Hee that shall dare to interpose my purpose,
 Or crosse mee in mine Hymineall rights,
 I'll make him lie as flat on the cold earth
 As doth this hound Egistus. [...]
 My hand's yet deepe in blood, but to the wrist,
 It shall be to the elbowe; gods, nor men,
 Angels, nor Furies shall my rage withstand,
 Not the grave Honour of th'assembled Kings,
 Not Reverence of the Altar, nor the Priest;
 No superstition shall my fury slay
 Till Pyrrhus from the earth be swept away.

(HEYWOOD, *Iron Age* 2 Act 5, Scene 1)¹⁵

The play ends in the very next scene with the intended marriage of Pyrrhus and Hermione. Menelaus, Ulysses, Diomedes, Thersites and Synon are all in attendance. As soon as Pyrrhus invites the priest to begin the ceremony, in rush Orestes, Pylades and Cethus with weapons drawn. Heywood's own stage directions then read: "A confused scuffle, in which Orestes kills Pyrrhus; Pyrrhus, Orestes; Cethus wounds Pilades, Diomed, Menelaus, Ulysses, Thersites, &c. All fall dead save Ulysses, who beareth thence Hermione; which done, Cethus riseth up from the dead bodies and speaks."¹⁶ Cethus has a brief conversation with Synon, who was only pretending to be dead. Helen arrives with Electra and Hermione, takes a looking-glass from the latter, admires her beauty, and then strangles herself. Ulysses returns and, as the sole survivor of the Greeks who sailed to Troy, delivers the playwright's epilogue. The text of the play ends with the grand words, "Here ends the whole history of the destruction of Troy."¹⁷

Finally, the history of the reception of Euripides' *Andromache* in modern literature is dominated above all by French dramatist Jean Racine's *Andromaque* from 1667, in the age of the Sun King, Louis XIV of France. It was only the third of Racine's plays, and the second of many plays to draw upon Greek drama as their source.¹⁸ Racine eliminated some of the characters of Euripides'

15 Heywood (1632) 79^v–80^r.

16 Heywood (1632) 81^r.

17 Heywood (1632) 82^v.

18 For example, *Phèdre* (below, pp. 460–2) and *Iphigénie* (above, pp. 18–9).

play—Menelaus, Peleus, Thetis, and a singing role for Andromache's son—and instead invented confidants for each of the four major roles: Cléone (also spelled Cleonne) for Hermione, Céphise for Andromache, Pylades for his cousin Orestes, and—perhaps referencing Luc Percheron's *Pyrrhe*—Phoenix for Pyrrhus. As for the plot, in his prefaces to the *Andromaque* (he wrote two different prefaces for publication in 1673 and 1676 respectively) Racine explained his decisions for having altered the Euripidean original. Both prefaces begin with a Latin quotation of Vergil's *Aeneid* 3. 292–3, 301, 303–5, 320–8, and 330–2 (the very passage discussed earlier), which is claimed to be the subject of the tragedy and the source for its cast, apart from Hermione, whose jealousy and passions are said to have been defined in Euripides' *Andromache*. It is in the second preface, however, where Racine admits Hermione's passions are the only Euripidean aspect of his play; the rest is very different. Furthermore, he recalls that Euripides himself was even bolder in his *Helen* in changing the plot to be in contradiction to the common belief; and Racine shows off his classical knowledge by mentioning that the story of Helen in Egypt was accepted only by the Egyptians themselves and by Herodotus. Racine goes on, "I do not believe that I have need of this example from Euripides to justify the small liberty that I have taken, because there is a great difference between destroying a story's very foundations, and altering some events which are changed anyway by every hand that portrays them" (*Andromaque*, Second Preface).¹⁹

Racine's decision to defend himself is understandable, since his alterations to the Euripidean plot are many; even so, some of these changes conform to earlier traditions. Pyrrhus is now a major character, and Orestes arrives at his court (set in Buthrotum in Epirus, the very place where, as seen above, Aeneas met Andromache in *Aeneid* 3) in the very first scene, where he is reunited with his cousin and friend Pylades, from whose ship he was separated some six months previously. In Racine's version, Orestes had been betrothed to Hermione until her father Menelaus had broken their agreement (which is the situation in Euripides) so that Hermione could be engaged to Pyrrhus; but unlike in Euripides, the marriage between Hermione and Pyrrhus still has not taken place, yet Hermione remains a perpetual guest at his court. Ever since Hermione (in Orestes' words) *à Pyrrhus prodiguoit tous ses charmes* ("had shown all her charms to Pyrrhus," *Andromaque* 50), Orestes had foresworn his love for her.²⁰ Pyrrhus meanwhile has taken under his protection the widowed Andromache and her son by Hector, who in this version has survived Troy, as he did in the medieval tradition; Racine gives the boy his Euripidean name, Astyanax. Now Orestes has come to Pyrrhus' court on behalf of all the

19 Knight/Barnwell (1977) 205.

20 Knight/Barnwell (1977) 67.

Greeks to demand that he should no longer harbor Hector's son; it is a kind of delayed action from Euripides' *Trojan Women*, in which Astyanax was killed by the Greeks before they left Troy (a detail also mentioned in the prologue of Euripides' *Andromache*).²¹ Orestes also admits that he himself still loves Hermione, and he plans to carry her off, not least because of the rumor that Pyrrhus has fallen in love with Andromache:

PYLADES: His (Pyrrhus') fires have been kindled for Hector's widow; he loves her. But in the end, this widow has so far repaid his love with nothing but hate. And every day we see him still trying to woo his captive, or terrify her; he threatens the life of her son, whom he keeps from her, and makes her cry tears which he himself then stops. Hermione herself more than a hundred times has seen this angry lover return to Andromache.

(RACINE, *Andromaque* 108–16)²²

This is one of Racine's most important innovations to the Andromache myth: the perspective of Neoptolemus/Pyrrhus that Euripides never shows us, and the grand passion he has for Andromache, with the result that, in Pylades' estimation, Pyrrhus has *un Cœur, si peu maistre de luy* ("a heart so little the master of itself," *Andromaque* 120).²³ The love tetrad of Orestes-Hermione-Pyrrhus-Andromache keeps the play's entire plot in motion. Pyrrhus delays marrying Hermione until he can convince Andromache to marry him instead; but for Racine, Andromache's love is only for the deceased Hector, and she and Pyrrhus have never been lovers. Meanwhile Orestes convinces Hermione he still loves her; and she agrees that if Pyrrhus spares the life of Astyanax, he would never make an acceptable son-in-law to Menelaus, and then Hermione would be free to marry Orestes. When Andromache continues to reject Pyrrhus' proposals of marriage, he threatens to kill Astyanax and announces he will indeed marry Hermione; furthermore, he asks Orestes (as her kinsman) to help prepare her; this in turn changes Hermione's feelings to be more positive towards Pyrrhus. But when Andromache gives in and agrees to marry, Hermione is furious at being "dumped" by Pyrrhus and commands Orestes to murder him at his wedding to Andromache. Hermione later has second thoughts, but she is unable to prevent the murder. When Orestes announces that Pyrrhus has been killed at the altar by the Greeks, Hermione expresses crazed regrets, rushes off-stage and stabs herself over Pyrrhus' corpse. Orestes sees the Furies approach him and falls senseless before a concerned Pylades.

21 On Astyanax both in Euripides and in Seneca, see above, pp. 48; 58–9.

22 Knight/Barnwell (1977) 68.

23 Knight/Barnwell (1977) 69.

Although Racine constructed a plot that is very different from his Euripidean prototype, nonetheless he preserved several key Euripidean plot points, even if in some cases the form of the plot points was inverted or modified. Firstly, in both plays Hermione and Andromache have a confrontation with each other as rivals. In Euripides, this happens early in the play (*Andromache* 147–273) when both women exchange insults and accusations in front of a chorus of female neighbors. But the altercation is unresolved, and Hermione leaves Andromache at the altar of Thetis with not-so-subtle hints that plots are underway to dispose of her. The chorus women's reaction summarizes the whole scene, yet at the same time is prescriptive for what Euripides' audience should expect from this domestic tragedy: "To be sure, the female mind is a jealous thing, and it is always the most hostile towards rivals in love" (Euripides, *Andromache* 181–2). In Racine, the women have the briefest of encounters, but it is an encounter nonetheless, and each woman chooses her words carefully, performing for the other. Hermione and her confidante Cléone are interrupted in Act 3, Scene 4 by Andromache and her confidante Céphise:

CLÉONE: Your rival approaches in tears, no doubt to lay her grief at your feet.

HERMIONE: Gods! Am I not allowed to abandon my soul to my joy? Let's leave. What could I say to her? [*Enter Andromache and Céphise*]

ANDROMACHE: Where are you fleeing to, Madame? Is it not a sweet enough sight for your eyes that Hector's widow weeps at your knees? I do not come here with jealous tears, to envy you a heart that bows to your charms. [...] You could get support from Pyrrhus just as I got it from it Hector. Why be afraid of a child who lives when his father is dead? Let me hide him on some deserted island; you can be assured that, under his mother's care, my son can learn nothing from me except how to weep.

HERMIONE: I feel your pain. But an austere duty ordains that I keep quiet whenever my father has spoken. It is he who is making Pyrrhus angry. If Pyrrhus must be swayed, who can do it better than you? Your eyes have ruled over his soul long enough. Make him decide; I would abide by it, Madame. [*Exit Hermione and Cléone*]

ANDROMACHE: What contempt the cruel woman attaches to her refusals!

CÉPHISE: I would trust her counsel, and I would see Pyrrhus. One look would confound Hermione and Greece.

(RACINE, *Andromaque* 855–62, 876–89)²⁴

24 Knight/Barnwell (1977) 98–100.

Secondly, in both plays a threat is made to Andromache's son to coerce her into making a decision. In Euripides, Menelaus captures Andromache's son by Neoptolemus and threatens to kill him unless she leaves the protection of Thetis' altar; Andromache chooses to leave the altar, but is duped because Menelaus then prepares to kill both mother and child. In Racine, Pyrrhus threatens to kill Andromache's son Astyanax unless she agrees to marry him; Pyrrhus uses flattery at other times as well, but it is the threat of the child's death which ultimately persuades Andromache to relent and marry her master (which she does). In two tremendous and tender dialogues with her confidante Céphise, ending the third act and beginning the fourth, Andromache debates the pros and cons of betraying her love for Hector in order to save their son. It is the crux of the play, and Andromache's dilemma is set "over against a world with its own laws, in which we can only live by choosing (Andromaque can save the life of Astyanax if only she will marry Pyrrhus; or she can save her loyalty to Hector if only she will give up Astyanax), a world whose laws force us to choose."²⁵ Andromache eventually decides on a course of action that allows her to achieve both ends; she will marry Pyrrhus, bind him to protect her son forever, and then kill herself. As she explains it in Act 4, Scene 1, *Et sauvant ma vertu, rendra ce que je doy, / A Pyrrhus, à mon Fils, à mon Espoux, à moy* ("And preserving my honor, I will pay what I owe to Pyrrhus, to my son, to my husband, and to myself," *Andromaque* 1095–6).²⁶ Andromache movingly begs Céphise to live on after her planned suicide and look after Astyanax, and in particular to watch that Pyrrhus keeps his promises. Then Andromache leaves the stage as she hears Hermione approaching; Andromache never appears again, and from here the plot focuses on Hermione, in a manner reminiscent of Euripides. In the event, Andromache does not commit suicide after her wedding to Pyrrhus, since he himself is murdered.

Thirdly, in both plays Hermione has a "mad-scene" where she regrets her actions and imagines a dreadful future—a good example of what Racine in his prefaces called her "jealousy and passions". In Euripides, Hermione's mad-scene occurs after her plot to kill Andromache has failed and she fears that Neoptolemus will kill her when he returns home; after Hermione's panic indoors is described by her nurse, Hermione herself bursts onto the scene, singing:

25 Goldmann (1970) 105.

26 Knight/Barnwell (1977) 109.

HERMIONE: What is the use of covering my breast with my robes? The things I plotted against my husband are clear and known to all, and exposed!

NURSE: Do you grieve because you plotted death for your rival?

HERMIONE: I lament for the destructive daring that I wrought, I abominable, abominable in the eyes of mankind!

(EURIPIDES, *Andromache* 833–9)²⁷

Similarly, Act 5 of Racine's play opens with Hermione delivering a monologue of conflicting emotions: pity for Pyrrhus, yet implacable desire for revenge for his faithlessness:

HERMIONE: Where am I? What have I done? What should I do next? What is holding me up? What grief consumes me? Wandering aimlessly, I run through this palace. Ah! Can't I know whether I love, or I hate? The cruel man! With what a glance he dismissed me! Without pity, without a semblance of pain. [...] Does my heart, my cowardly heart, still take his side? I tremble just to think of the death-blow that threatens him.

(RACINE, *Andromaque* 1393–8, 1404–5)²⁸

The change that Racine makes to Euripides is a clever reversal that nonetheless maintains the mood of the Greek original. Racine's Hermione is not afraid of what Pyrrhus will do to her for her plots against Andromache, but rather of what she herself has plotted against Pyrrhus; yet her passion and violent panic remain quintessentially Euripidean.

Finally, in both plays, the murder of Neoptolemus/Pyrrhus is organized by Orestes out of desire for Hermione, yet Orestes himself does not wield the knife. In Euripides, Orestes plots the murder even before having seen Hermione, and it happens in Delphi. In Racine, it is Hermione who asks Orestes to commit the murder for her, and it takes place just off-stage at Pyrrhus' wedding to Andromache; and in Act 5, Scene 3 Orestes reveals that, although he tried to strike the death-blow himself, it was the other Greeks who beat him to it:

27 Hermione is singing, the Nurses speaks in response. On the significance of the contrasting modes of delivery in this scene, see Chong-Gossard (2008) 83–8, 90–1.

28 Knight/Barnwell (1977) 121–2.

ORESTES: On all sides the traitor was surrounded, and I couldn't find a place to strike him. Each man vied for the honor of the death-blow. I saw him struggling for some time in their hands, wanting to hide all his bleeding from their blows, but at last, by the altar, he fell.

(RACINE, *Andromaque* 1515–20)²⁹

Thus, although Racine did admit in his prefaces that his play was *très différent* than Euripides' *Andromache*, he nonetheless maintained some of the original's qualities, including Orestes' less-than-heroic nature as evidenced by him failing to kill Pyrrhus with his own hand, the element of Andromache's "choice," and some dramatic assumptions about gender: namely, that Hermione is defined by her passions, that rival women will fight with each other with words, and that a man cannot have more than one woman.³⁰

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

The reception of Euripides' *Andromache* in painting and sculpture is very hard to find, since most renditions of Andromache herself tend to relate to her marriage to Hector (as described in Homer's *Iliad* 6), or her captivity during the sack of Troy (as described in Euripides' *Trojan Women*). Instead, some fine arts can be identified as referencing the plot of Racine's *Andromaque*. The engravings of French artist François Chauveau for the 1676 printed edition of Racine's play, and Anne-Louise Girodet's series of illustrations for another printed edition in 1801, are two such examples. But perhaps the most successful is the painting *Andromaque et Pyrrhus* by Paris-born painter Pierre-Narcisse Guérin. This large canvas measuring 3.42 meters by 4.57 meters, now in the Louvre, was first exhibited in 1810.³¹ Pyrrhus, dressed in saffron red, sits upon a raised throne in a marbled audience chamber and stares at a male figure

29 Knight/Barnwell (1977) 127.

30 Racine's *Andromaque* has a reception history of its own (which is in turn further evidence of the reception of Euripides). Two brief literary examples are the *Andromaque*'s translation into English by John Crowne for performance in 1674; and an adaptation in English by Ambrose Philips, *The Distressed Mother*, in 1712. Operatic and 20th-century theatrical reception of Racine's play will be discussed in the next sections.

31 Inv. 5183. The Louvre also has another version of Guérin's *Andromaque et Pyrrhus*, MI 587, a sketch in pencil measuring only 30 cm by 45.5 cm. The figures of Andromache and Astyanax are the most fully executed.

carrying a staff, presumably Orestes delivering the Greeks' demand that Astyanax be killed. But Pyrrhus' hands gesture towards the kneeling figure of Andromache, dressed in white veils and forming a triangular shape as she wraps her protective arms around a very young (and partially nude) Astyanax. Her eyes look upward, pleadingly, at Pyrrhus. At the side, a dark-haired Hermione with eyes that shoot daggers at Andromache is already in the process of fleeing the room, her garments billowing as they do on many an ancient statue of Nike. The entire plot of Racine's play and all its emotions of jealousy, anger, love, and pity, are encapsulated in a single moment and communicated by the gesture of hands and the poignancy of glances.

Music

Meanwhile, the reception of Euripides' *Andromache* in the world of opera is extraordinarily wide and varied. As it has been argued convincingly, "*Andromache* was the most popular of the tragic subjects in the eighteenth-century *opera seria* when one counts the number of new operas that were composed in the course of that century."³² There are at least forty such operas, almost all of which conformed to the conventions of the time. In contrast to Jacobean tragedy in which the on-stage violent death of the entire cast of characters was part of the aesthetic, or French classicist drama with its raw display of human emotions, the Italian *dramma per musica* ("drama for music") aimed for decorum and required a *lieto fine* (a "happy ending"), albeit after complicated intrigues.³³ What follows here are brief plot summaries of the many libretti used for operatic performance in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries in Italy, Germany, Austria, France, and England, to illustrate not only the lengths to which Greek mythology could be stretched, but also how Euripides' *Andromache* set a standard of that mythology for others, either to emulate, or to use as a springboard for new dramatic ideas. Over time as Euripides' characters were thrown into increasingly complex scenarios, they became more and more like "stock" roles. Andromache was always the faithful woman, either Hector's widow, or Pyrrhus' rejected lover/wife; Hermione was the woman

32 Ograjenšek (2010) 112. *Opera seria* ("serious opera"), also known as *dramma per musica* ("drama for music"), is a musical term for a style of Italian opera performed in 18th century western Europe. It is contrasted with *opera buffa* ("comic opera"). Quite formulaic in its musical form and dramatic expectations, *opera seria* often presented a story set in antiquity or the middle ages, involved the complicated love affairs of royalty (who were often in disguise), and typically ended happily, sometimes illustrating the virtues of kings (such as clemency). *Opera buffa*, in contrast, presented stories of common people with less aristocratic problems.

33 See Ograjenšek (2010) 118 for a summary of the conventions of the Italian *dramma per musica*, in contrast to French classicist drama.

fought over by two men (much like her own mother, Helen); Orestes was the aggressor, sometimes envisioning himself as the rescuer; and Pyrrhus was the king who wants to have two women, but can't. Throughout all these stories runs a dramatic assumption that men and women should be "paired off" in the end, and in most cases Andromache is united (or re-united) with Pyrrhus.

The catalogue of Italian opera libretti based on the characters of Euripides' *Andromache* begins with Aurelio Aureli, who in fact wrote three different libretti. The first was *Gl' amori infruttuosi di Pirro* ("The Fruitless Loves of Pyrrhus"), set to music by Antonio Sartorio and performed in Venice in 1661. The starting point of its action closely follows Vergil's *Aeneid* 3 and Andromache's explanation of her life with Pyrrhus, but—in a manner typical of Italian *opera seria*—the story is expanded to include disguises, intrigues, magical interventions, a cast of characters including divine figures (in this case, Apollo, the Muses, and Circe), and a happy ending. In Aureli's narrative, Pyrrhus is married to Andromache, abducts Hermione, then rids himself of Andromache by marrying her off to Helenus after giving him part of his kingdom; there is no mention of Andromache's sons, either by Hector or Pyrrhus. Orestes and Pylades try to rescue Hermione (at one point Orestes dresses as a girl and is appointed Hermione's maidservant), and Andromache—disguised as a male warrior—saves Pyrrhus' life in the face of Orestes' army and once again becomes his wife.

Aureli's second and third libretti based on *Andromache* hurl the plot in even more bizarre directions. The second, entitled *Gli scherzi di Fortuna: subordinato al Pirro* ("Fortune's jests: a sequel to *Pirro*") was performed in Venice in 1662 with music by Pietro Andrea Ziani. Its imaginative story in which Orestes, Hermione, Andromache, and Pyrrhus are shipwrecked together on an enchanted island ruled by a despot who can be killed by an enchanted sword, is rightly described as "far from having any connection with Euripides."³⁴ The third libretto, *Ermione riacquisata* ("Hermione Rescued"), was set to music by Antonio Gianettini in 1683 when it was performed in Venice.³⁵ It was also translated into German by Christian Heinrich Postel as *Die glücklich-wiedererlangte Hermione* in 1695. Once again the plot, set on the island of Scyros, differs from Euripides. Andromache is Pyrrhus' concubine, but is set aside when Pyrrhus tries to force Hermione to marry him; meanwhile Pylades is also in love with Hermione, and Helenus is pursuing the jilted Andromache. Orestes arrives on Scyros in a pilgrim's disguise to rescue Hermione, but unfortunately Andromache herself falls in love with him, and Pylades thinks of him as a rival for Hermione's affections. In the end Orestes' identity is revealed; Pyrrhus

34 Ograjenšek (2010) 116.

35 I follow the date offered by Selfridge-Field (2007) 604.

plans to kill him but instead shows clemency. Orestes and Hermione marry, and Andromache (surprisingly!) marries Helenus.

In 1680, three years before Aureli's *Ermione riacquistata*, Ventura Terzago's *L' Ermione* was performed in Munich with music by Giuseppe Antonio Bernabei. With a plot that could rival Aureli's for its fantastical intrigue, *L' Ermione* is set in Sparta where king Menelaus (who has promised Hermione to Pyrrhus) has disguised himself as a private soldier named Delmite so that he can test the fidelity of his wife Helen, who is being pursued by a lieutenant named Adraspe. Andromache—who is Pyrrhus' wife and upset with his infidelity—dresses as a man, calls herself Ormino, and becomes friends with Menelaus. Orestes, to whom Hermione was originally betrothed, comes to Sparta disguised as a slave to Pylades, who announces falsely that Orestes has died in a shipwreck. After many intrigues, Orestes reveals his identity; Menelaus insists that Hermione belongs to Pyrrhus and asks him to take her hand; Orestes unsheathes his sword, but Andromache (still disguised as Ormino) grabs it and points it towards herself. When Menelaus asks 'Ormino' what he is doing, she reveals herself as an unhappy princess, and Hermione realizes she is Andromache, Pyrrhus' wife. All ends well when Helen suggests that Andromache should have Pyrrhus, and Hermione Orestes.

Two decades later, in 1701, two Italian librettists—Pietro d'Averara and Antonio Salvi—wrote adaptations of Racine's *Andromaque*, albeit reshaping the plot to end happily, as well as reducing the length from five acts to three acts. It is unknown who set d'Averara's *Andromaca* for its premiere in Milan; but Giacomo Antonio Perri set Salvi's *Astianatte* ('Astyanax') for its premiere in Florence. It was Salvi's adaptation of Racine that proved the more successful, and in subsequent decades the libretto was vigorously adapted, sometimes changing the plot, at other times substituting new duets in place of the original monologues.³⁶ As in Racine's play, there is a single scene (in Salvi's second act) where Hermione and Andromache meet and exchange words. Andromache asks for Hermione's help in persuading Pyrrhus to spare Astyanax, but Hermione's taunting reply as she prepares to depart is cause for an aria. Nicola Francesco Haym's adaptation of Salvi's libretto for the composer Giovanni

36 Composers who set adaptations of Salvi's *Astianatte* include Pietro Torri (1716), Antonio Maria Bononcini (1718), Francesco Gasparini (1719), Giuseppe Maria Buini (1723), Leonardo Vinci (1725), Giovanni Bononcini (1727), Giuseppe Nicola Albertini (1735), Niccolò Jommelli (1741), and—under the title *Andromaca*—Leonardo Leo (1742), Giovanni Battista Lampugnani (1748–1749), Antonio Sacchini (1761), Ferdinando Bertoni (1771), and Sebastiano Nasolini (1790), to name a few. These names and dates are taken from the helpful table at Ograjenšek (2010) 114–5.

Bononcini, produced in 1727 in London, includes an English translation of the Italian:

HERMIONE: You hold more Interest in that Heart, than I:
 One Look of yours does more than all my Prayers.
 Go to him, go; sigh, sob, and pray.
 Who knows but you'll prevail? you may;
 Your Eyes, late, sparkling with Disdain,
 Could wake his Love;—then, sure, soft Rain
 That drops, in Show'rs, from weeping Eyes,
 Must make awaken'd Mercy rise.
 Go to him, &c.

(SALVI/HAYM, *Astianatte* ACT 2, SCENE 2)³⁷

This very scene must have been the highlight of the 1727 London performance of Bononcini and Haym's *Astianatte*, since it is best remembered for the rival prima donnas in the lead roles, Francesca Cuzzoni (as Andromache) and Faustina Bordoni (as Hermione). According to accounts, the followers of these rival singers made quite a racket at their performances: "The audience presumably resumed battle at its première, but we hear nothing about the noise until the performance on 6 June, [...] and the din forced the omission of everything between the end of Act 2 and the closing chorus. [...] There is no evidence that Cuzzoni and Faustina themselves fought on stage, which is implied in parodies of the event (e.g. *The Beggar's Opera*)."³⁸

A fifth librettist who tackled the Andromache myth is Apostolo Zeno, whose *Andromaca* premiered in Vienna in 1724 with music by Antonio Caldara. The scene of the opera is Troy after it has been captured, and Andromache has been raising Ulysses' son Telemachus (whom she kidnapped at a young age) alongside her own son, Astyanax. The unusual plot involves Ulysses trying to find his son, Pyrrhus spurning Hermione so he can pursue Andromache, Telemachus and Astyanax both hiding in Hector's tomb, and in the end Pyrrhus marrying Hermione, Andromache and Astyanax being set free, and Ulysses and Telemachus returning to Ithaca. The libretto was "intended as a celebration of princely decorum" for a court occasion for the Hapsburg princes.³⁹

37 Salvi/Haym (1727) 30.

38 Lindgren, accessed 2015. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezp.lib.unimelb.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/O006742>.

39 Ograjenšek (2010) 128. Zeno's libretto was later set to music again by Antonio Bioni (1729) and Francesco Feo (1730).

A sixth librettist, the French dramatist Louis-Guillaume Pitra, adapted Racine's *Andromaque* once again for an opera (a French *tragédie lyrique*)⁴⁰ by André Ernest Modeste Grétry, which premiered in Paris in June 1780 after some delay (the first rehearsals had been scheduled in May 1778). The Paris opera scene at the time was dominated by the well-known composer Christoph Willibald Gluck, whose French tragic operas based on classical themes were well received and famously had the patronage of the French queen, Marie-Antoinette. Gluck's rival Grétry was considered the leading composer of comic opera (*opéra comique*), and the *Andromaque* was his opportunity to demonstrate his ability to compose for tragedy. Pitra's French libretto is extremely faithful to Racine's text, using the same metre and in many instances incorporating Racine's original words unaltered; but as would be expected for an opera, choruses are added with newly-composed lines, and scenes are truncated, or cut altogether, or put in different sequences. The tragic ending is retained, with Pyrrhus and Andromache's wedding enacted on-stage until the Greeks revolt against him and drag him away; later the chorus relates to Orestes how Hermione has stabbed herself over Pyrrhus' corpse off-stage.

A seventh librettist, name unknown, produced a new Italian *opera seria*, titled *L'Andromaca*, in 1797 for the composer Giovanni Paisiello.⁴¹ The opera is actually more closely related to the events of Seneca's *Troades*, since Andromache hides Astyanax in Hector's tomb so that he will not be ritually sacrificed (as predicted by Calchas), yet Ulysses tricks her into revealing his location.⁴² But it is Pyrrhus' love for Andromache and his promise to protect Astyanax that reveals the libretto's debt to Racine's *Andromaque*. In the end, Andromache agrees to marry Pyrrhus, and Ulysses predicts that she will be Pyrrhus' ruin. Orestes and Hermione do not appear. This same libretto (or at least a revision of it) was the basis for Giacomo Tritto's *opera seria*, *Andromaca e Pirro*, produced in Rome in 1807.⁴³

The most famous opera based on Racine's *Andromaque* is surely Gioachino Rossini's *Ermione*, with an Italian libretto by Andrea Leone Tottola that reduces the five-act French drama into a two-act opera. After its first seven

40 The *tragédie lyrique* was a genre of French opera with origins in the late 17th century, the age of Racine himself. Like the Italian *opera seria*, the *tragédie lyrique* was often based on stories from Greek mythology or Italian romances, and often had a happy ending. Whereas the *opera seria* typically had three acts, the *tragédie lyrique* usually had five. The opposing genre was *opéra comique*.

41 In Ograjenšek's words (2010) 128, "the chain of librettos based on Salvi was broken."

42 For a full discussion of Seneca's play, see above, pp. 53–62.

43 As of 2015, the original edition of this 1807 libretto has been digitized as a Google e-book.

performances in 1819, *Ermione* was lost to the opera-going public for over a century and a half and was not performed again until August 22, 1987, with Marilyn Horne as Andromache and Montserrat Caballé as Hermione. The exceptionally difficult vocal writing, which would test any *bel canto* singer, famously proved more than Montserrat Caballé could handle, with the result that she was violently booed by the audience.⁴⁴ Presumably it was her performance, and not Rossini's music itself, which was disparaged. Of all the operatic adaptations of Racine's play, it is Rossini and Tottola's opera that comes closest to recreating the spirit of the ancient source, Euripides' *Andromache*. This is illustrated by two scenes in particular. In Act 2, Scene 2, Andromache is lost in thought when Hermione (accompanied by Phoenix and Cléone) interrupts her and insults her. Whereas in Racine (and Salvi's libretto) Andromache asks Hermione for help but is told to use her charms on Pyrrhus herself, in Tottola's libretto Hermione insults Andromache from the start, assuming that Andromache has already made plans to marry Pyrrhus. Rossini scores the sopranos' exchange as a recitative with a wide vocal range, and the libretto has the acerbity one associates with the catfight at the start of Euripides' play:

HERMIONE: Where, oh deadly enemy, are you directing your steps? To the temple? To the throne? Yet while I live, never hope to take the hand of that unfaithful man.

ANDROMACHE: Are you adding your complaints to my misfortunes?

PHOENIX: But say, has the rumor not been spread in vain, that soon to Pyrrhus . . . ?

HERMIONE: What doubt is there, Phoenix? The charms and wiles that the cunning woman has used to win victory, have buried in oblivion her promises and her reputation.

ANDROMACHE: Wiles? Charms? Oh, be quiet, and respect in me, someone you barely know . . . I could . . . but I am different from you, so I generously pardon your tantrums. [*Exit*]

PHOENIX: Oh, rash Pyrrhus!

CLÉONE: Oh, unlucky friend!

HERMIONE: She races to her triumph!

(TOTTOLA, *Ermione* ACT 2, SCENE 2)⁴⁵

44 Gossett (2008) 8.

45 Tottola (2010) 119–20. I have provided my own translation of the Italian, not the booklet's translation.

A second scene reminiscent of Euripides is Hermione's monologue near the opera's end, at which point she agitatedly expresses regret for having plotted Pyrrhus' murder:

HERMIONE: What have I done? Where am I? Everywhere a frightening vision follows me! I don't know where I am turning my feet as I wander! [...] But isn't he (Pyrrhus) hastening to the end of his days through your doing, pitiless woman? Oh, how hasty was your order! The fury that possesses you dimmed your mind, your vision. Ah no!

(TOTTOLA, *Ermione* ACT 2, SCENE 5)⁴⁶

Rossini's music for this mad scene, a *recitative accompagnato*, is some of the most dramatic in the opera, making use of all the brass in the orchestra (trumpets, horns, and funereal trombones) and the full gamut of orchestral techniques and timbres, from string tremolos to tender, lyric lines on the clarinet, to loud, sustained dissonant chords from the brass. The music expertly follows the shifts in Hermione's moods as she regrets plotting against Pyrrhus' life, imagines reconciling with him, and freezes at the realization that she cannot stop the murder she has put in place.

Tottola's libretto makes a very significant departure from Racine with regard to the play's ending. Rather than have Hermione rush off-stage to commit suicide over Pyrrhus' corpse, *Ermione* ends with her calling the murderous Orestes a monster and rejecting his love. Pylades arrives with a chorus of followers to whisk Orestes away on a ship before Pyrrhus' people come to lynch him. Hermione has gone quite mad and, staggering, sings her final words to Orestes before fainting: "Go then... may the treacherous sea be my grief's avenger for your crimes! [*She falls senseless*]"⁴⁷ Thus Orestes and his comrades hastily depart, and the orchestra whirls towards its closing chords while the curtain falls on an unconscious Hermione. The classically trained spectator who recognises that later texts can offer re-readings of the ancient texts that they receive, might well wonder whether this is how Euripides imagined his Hermione would eventually end up after she fled Phthia with Orestes: totally mad, and lying senseless on the theatre floor.⁴⁸

46 Tottola (2010) 129.

47 Tottola (2010) 137.

48 Two other musical receptions of Racine's *Andromaque* are noteworthy. Pauline Viardot-Garcia, one of the leading French mezzo-sopranos who retired from singing in 1863, set Hermione's response to Pyrrhus from Act 4 Scene 4, *Je ne t'ai point (pas) aimé, Cruel?* ("That I have never loved you, cruel one?") as a dramatic piece for voice and piano. In 1903 French composer Camille Saint-Saëns wrote incidental music to accompany a per-

Dance

Two examples of 21st century choreography can be cited in the history of the reception of Euripides' *Andromache*, but—like so many other examples—both are based on Racine's play. In 2001–2002 a drama/dance work *Andromaque* by Swedish choreographer Mats Ek, with text by Racine and music by Niko Röhlcke, was performed at the Royal Dramatic Theater in Stockholm.⁴⁹ And in 2005, a dance theatre adaptation of Racine's *Andromaque* entitled *In a Hall in the Palace of Pyrrhus* was performed in New York with choreography by Daniel Safer.⁵⁰ To my knowledge, there are no dance works specifically inspired by the Euripidean original.

On Stage and Screen

Stage

Compared to Euripides' other plays, the *Andromache* has been underused as an inspiration for stage drama in the 20th and 21st centuries. The three dramas below that have used either Euripides or Racine as their starting point tend, rather unfortunately, not to be among a playwright's best recognized pieces.

British-born American playwright Eric Bentley's *A Time To Live*, which premiered in New York in 1967 with its companion piece *A Time To Die*, unabashedly retells Euripides' *Andromache*, albeit with a very different ending. The printed version of the play even includes "the author's apology":

To Euripides
 You told how this world was, and nothing's changed:
 Pyrrhus has died a million deaths since your day
 Slain by ten million Oresteses.
 The hoodlum gets the hero every time.
 And that is that? The world is ruled by hoodlums
 Abetted by their genocidal gunmolls
 And backed up by the boys who run for office?
 You didn't say so: you created Peleus.

formance of Racine's *Andromaque* at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt in Paris. Both pieces are rarely performed in the 21st century.

49 A short video of Mats Ek's *Andromaque* can be viewed at <http://vimeo.com/14295247> (Accessed 21 Jan 2015).

50 A mixed review can be found at <http://www.nysun.com/arts/pyrrhus-in-the-summer/18481> (Accessed 21 Jan 2015).

But then you sent his wife the goddess Thetis
 To yank him off to Florida or someplace!
 We can't accept that. Peleus has to stay
 To show that things could end another way.

(BENTLEY, *A Time To Live*)⁵¹

The focus on Peleus is an interesting choice, since his role in the Andromache story was dramatized nowhere else in the history of its reception. *A Time To Live* begins with two messengers in succession informing the King of Thiotis (who is soon identified as Peleus) of the impending arrival of his grandson Pyrrhus, who on his return from the Trojan war has placed his concubine Andromache and their illegitimate son Molossus in a sanctuary of Minerva for their protection against his wife Hermione and her father Menelaus. In the second scene which takes place in "the Temple," Bentley combines, into one seamless scene, the action of three episodes from Euripides' *Andromache*: Hermione and Andromache's verbal altercation (*Andromache* 147–273), Menelaus' threats to Andromache which result in her abandoning Thetis' altar (*Andromache* 309–463), and Peleus' rescue of Andromache and her son as they are being led to execution (*Andromache* 545–756). Bentley's reduction allows his Menelaus and Hermione to threaten Andromache together, but in so doing, Menelaus reveals his uselessness as Hermione unleashes her extreme jealousy. Bentley follows the spirit of Euripides quite closely, including Hermione's accusation that Andromache is casting spells on her, but he updates the language with the vulgarity and racial slurs of the 1960s:

ANDROMACHE: Why shouldn't you know? Pyrrhus said he would try to be of use to the child.

HERMIONE: What makes you believe such a monster of iniquity?

ANDROMACHE: It is his son, you see.

HERMIONE: Ha!

ANDROMACHE: Besides, he's very changed. In his whole attitude. . .

HERMIONE: I see, all right! I see, you bitch! And there's no need to rub it in!

MENELAUS: Hermione, if we get on *that* subject. . .

HERMIONE: He never gave *me* any son!

ANDROMACHE: Is that my fault?

HERMIONE: How do *I* know? I've heard you Trojan women are witches! But how would *I* know if you'd bewitched my womb, made me infertile?

51 Bentley (1969) 92.

ANDROMACHE: When did you last live with Pyrrhus? He's been in Troy!

HERMIONE: Yeah, with you, right? You yellow-skinned Trojan whore!

MENELAUS: Hermione!

ANDROMACHE: Pyrrhus hadn't even met me when he lived with you.

HERMIONE: How do I know you didn't start seducing him and sterilizing me years before you set eyes on either one of us?

MENELAUS: Hermione, all this will get you nowhere.

HERMIONE: Oh yeah? On the contrary, this is where the action starts. (*In a tone of military command.*) Come out of that damned sanctuary this minute. (*Silence. Stillness. Shrieking.*) Come out, you bitch, or I'll burn the place down!

(BENTLEY, *A Time to Live*)⁵²

When Pyrrhus arrives, the audience learns that the Trojan war “was fought for the aggrandizement of Agamemnon,” who expects “that the cities of Greece will fall one by one into his pocket, our Thiotis among them.”⁵³ Pyrrhus is the kind of prince who wants to defy Agamemnon and fight for Thiotis' independence; but the King is an old man who would rather avoid violence and depend on diplomacy and accommodation. Even so, the King wishes to pass his throne to Pyrrhus, which Pyrrhus agrees to accept if the King will legitimize Molossus. But the King suggests that a priest of Apollo at Delphi could perform this with more authority, so Pyrrhus heads off to Delphi in secret and without a body-guard. After Hermione learns about this during an uncomfortable dinner with her father Menelaus, she meets up with her cousin Orestes, who has set up shop in Thiotis as the head of “Argive Industries,” which Menelaus demystifies as “a gimmick for bringing Argive hatchet men into Thiotis.”⁵⁴ Hermione convinces Orestes to assassinate Pyrrhus in exchange for her hand in marriage. In the next scene, a servant reports to the King, in vintage tragic messenger style, how Orestes and Hermione and their hooded assassins killed Pyrrhus before he reached Delphi; Hermione declared herself queen of Thiotis and named Orestes her new husband and king.

Bentley's play then takes a unique direction: Agamemnon arrives in Thiotis with a military escort (even though in all other versions of the myth, Agamemnon is long dead by now), and a long conversation ensues with the King about the reality of the new political situation. At first feigning outrage at what his son has done, Agamemnon eventually admits that he will take

⁵² Bentley (1969) 64.

⁵³ Bentley (1969) 68.

⁵⁴ Bentley (1969) 73.

advantage of it and add Thiotis to his empire, and that it would be better for the King to go into voluntary exile. At this point the King wakes up from “the coma into which the terrible news had thrown him”⁵⁵ and now realizes the truth of Pyrrhus’ position on the need to resist Agamemnon. The conversation ends in a stalemate, and the play itself ends quickly with Pyrrhus’ corpse on a bier and the King addressing the people of Thiotis, encouraging them to resist Agamemnon and his potential invasion, and formally legitimizing Molossus. Although the play ends there, political dominoes have been put in place so that what would happen next is anyone’s guess . . . and this is certainly the point. Although on one level Bentley’s play utilizes Greek mythology to represent any political crisis or any war in any age, it nonetheless is unmistakably a product of an American consciousness in the late 1960s with its contemporary history of the cold War with the Soviet Union, the John F. Kennedy assassination, and the Vietnam War.

Two other 20th-century plays take Racine’s *Andromaque* as their inspiration.⁵⁶ First is *Pyrrhus and Andromache* by Ferdinand Bruckner (pseudonym of Viennese-born Theodor Tagger), who had spent much of his middle age in the USA. He returned to Europe in 1951 at the age of 60, the very time that he was writing *Pyrrhus and Andromache*, which premiered in 1952 in Zürich. This is a tragedy in verse, replicating the essential features of Racine’s play. Bruckner’s most successful play had been *Elisabeth von England* in 1930, but his attempts at classical drama have not been considered a great success.⁵⁷

Second, in 1991, Craig Raine’s *1953: a version of Racine’s Andromaque* was first performed at the Glasgow Citizens’ Theatre, and then in 1996 at the Almeida Theatre in London. Better known for his poetry and the “Martian poetry” movement of the 1970s and 1980s in Britain, Raine was commissioned by the BBC to write a drama for radio broadcast in 1990. The play imagines an alternate history eight years after the end of the Second World War; but in this universe, the Axis powers were triumphant. Benito Mussolini’s son Vittorio holds the Princess of Wales and her son Angus hostage, and Hitler (who is still alive) sends a German count (named Count von Orestes, of course) to demand that the Italians hand over the heir to the English throne to Germany. But, true to the spirit of Racine, Vittorio (the Pyrrhus role) has fallen in love with his English

55 Bentley (1969) 86.

56 A third adaptation belongs to the 21st century. Canadian poet Evie Christie’s adaptation, directed by Graham McLaren, was produced by the Necessary Angel Theatre Company in Toronto in 2011. I have been unable to find the text of Christie’s play in print, but a quick internet search reveals that the performance received mixed reviews.

57 Furness and Humble (1997) 50.

hostage, Princess Annette LeSkye (the Andromache role), even though he is engaged to marry the German princess, Ira (Hermione). Annette's confidante is her old lady-in-waiting, Kate (Racine's Céphise), whereas Ira (whose name appropriately means "anger" in Latin) has for her companion a male servant, Eberhard (a male version of Racine's Cléone). Even with the name changes, Raine's play follows Racine extremely faithfully, reproducing the order of acts and scenes, and in many places reading like a modernized translation of the French original. For example, at Act 3, Scenes 3–5, Ira and Annette re-enact Hermione and Andromache's confrontation:

EBERHARD: (*Scots accent.*) Brazen hizzie, haud your blether. Lady Och Aye.

IRA: Oh no. Let's leave. No time for stealth.

I want to luxuriate, not waste time on her.

(*IRA and EBERHARD are leaving when ANNETTE's voice detains them with its natural authority when it is raised.*)

ANNETTE: I promise not to keep you long
but I must speak to your royal highness now.

Their obligations to the strong
are constantly present to the weak,
but power has its duties, too. [...]

Perhaps Vittorio would pick
some colony, sentence us to exile there,
if only you would intercede .

Help us. Please.

IRA: If I could, I would. But I can't.

I have to take the Führer's lead
in this, as in everything. Vittorio is independent.

Ask him yourself. When he has weighed
the argument you've just produced so tellingly,
the king could easily be swayed. (*Exit IRA and EBERHARD*)

ANNETTE: She *snubs* a plea for mercy?
(*Nods slowly*). And demeans herself.

KATE. Speak to the king. Her little quip,
whatever she intended, isn't such bad advice.
He'll listen to your ladyship.

(RAINE 1953, ACT 3, SCENES 3–5)⁵⁸

58 Raine (1990) 51–3.

In contrast, the “mad-scene” of Ira (Hermione) that begins Act 5 has a contemporary form. Instead of wandering the halls of the palace, Ira is packing her suitcases and trunks in utter chaos, looks at dresses she hasn’t worn for a while, throws out old shoes, examines her face in a compact mirror, and talks to herself in broken phrases about her lack of feeling after being dumped by Vittorio (Pyrrhus):

IRA: He’s left me like a light on in a room
and nothing changes till I melt:
I feel alive and empty. Can’t tell day from night.
What’s the weather like outside?
It could be raining. Unsteadily. For a change.
Pouring with sun. I can’t decide
anything. No feeling. Whatever it is,
I’m here, I’m in my element.
A live wire that can’t feel anything at all.
One moment. Empty. Long. Intent.

(RAINE 1953, ACT 5, SCENE 1)⁵⁹

As for the murder that ends the play, Racine followed the Euripidean model in which Neoptolemus/Pyrrhus was assassinated by a mob, and Orestes failed to strike the death-blow. In Raine’s play, Count von Orestes kills Vittorio (Pyrrhus) with his own hand (rather like the detail in Guido delle Colonne’s *Historia*), stabbing Vittorio in the back as he leans to sign the registry book after his marriage to Annette. Raine’s Orestes even feels sorry for his victim’s blissful unawareness that anyone was planning to kill him. “He had no idea. Not a thought. Well, why should he? I wasn’t known for treachery” (Raine 1953, Act 5, Scene 1).⁶⁰

Screen

To my knowledge, there are no screen adaptations of Euripides’ *Andromache*. However, French film director Jacques Rivette’s *L’amour fou* (“Mad Love”) from 1969 revolves around a theatrical company’s rehearsal of Racine’s *Andromaque*. The film lasts over four hours.

59 Raine (1990) 80.

60 Raine (1990) 85.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Andromache*

There are not, to my knowledge, any specific major works devoted to the reception of Euripides' *Andromache*. Nonetheless, an excellent, almost monumental work that must be acknowledged is Brown/Ograjenšek (2010). It describes very well the debt owed by the baroque and classical operatic stage to ancient drama. Ograjenšek's exceptional chapter on the Andromache myth in Italian *opera seria* has been referenced extensively here.

An excellent sourcebook for the reception of ancient myth is Reid, J. D. (1993) *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1990s*. Vols. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pages 102–105 are the entry for “Andromache,” which includes not only works of art, music, poetry, and theatre influenced by Euripides' *Andromache*, but also by the character of Andromache as she is understood from other ancient sources, including Euripides' *Trojan Women* and Homer. This section of Reid's extensive catalogue also includes items relevant to Hermione and Pyrrhus.⁶¹

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

Literature

- Goodkin, R. (1984) “A Choice of Andromache's,” *Yale French Studies* 67: 225–47.
- McClure, E. M. (2006) *Sunspots and the Sun King: sovereignty and mediation in seventeenth-century France*. University of Illinois Press.
- Phillippo, S. (2007) “A future for Astyanax': alternative and imagined futures for Hector's son in classical and European drama,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 14: 321–74.
- Stone, D. (1974) *French Humanist Tragedy: A Reassessment*. Manchester University Press.
- van Zyl Smit, B. (2008) “Seneca's representation of Andromache and its reception in French Drama,” *Acta Classica* 51: 163–85.

61 There are some errors, however. Giovanni Felice Sances' 1636 opera *L'Ermiona* is listed in this section (on p. 102), but this is actually an alternative spelling for Harmonia, the wife of Cadmus; thus the opera (which includes the rape of Europa) has nothing to do with Andromache or even the Trojan War. Similarly Max Bruch's 1872 opera *Hermione* (listed on p. 104) is actually based on Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, not classical myth.

Fine Arts

- Dratwicky, B. (2010) Booklet essay for recording of *Andromaque, tragédie lyrique*, by André Ernest Modeste Grétry. (Transl. by Mary Pardoe). Heidelberg: MusiContact GmbH.
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Stage and Screen

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- Gossett, P. (2008) *Divas and Scholars: performing Italian opera*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
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- Karsenti, T. (2008) "Pyrrhe sera toujours pire': Enjeux idéologiques et esthétiques du traitement de la mort de Pyrrhus dans la tragédie des années 1590," *Albineana* 20: 117–32.
- Knight, R. C. (ed.) (1969) *Racine: modern judgments*. London: Macmillan.
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Helen

Maria de Fátima Silva

In 412 BC, Euripides returned to the famous myth of Helen but adopted a version that was rarer than the traditional one.¹ Instead of the story in which Helen is abducted by Paris and taken to Troy, guilty of adultery and responsible for a war that would prove ruinous for Greeks and Trojans alike, he chose to depict her as a virtuous woman (although no less an object of desire and paradigm of passion), who was whisked away by the gods and entrusted to the care of the Egyptian pharaoh, Proteus. She was thus innocent of the senseless slaughter² although she continued to be unjustly accused by men in their ignorance. The Helen that was at Troy was actually a phantom lookalike (eidolon), as the real one was far away in Egypt, where she remained until the day that Menelaus, returning victorious to Sparta, found her again on the island of Pharos. In Egypt, Helen is pursued by a new suitor, Theoclymenus (this functions almost as a duplication of the adventure with the Trojan Paris), who took over the reins of power after the death of Proteus. There, she meets Teucer of Salamis, who fought at Troy but is condemned to exile because he was unable to prevent the suicide of his brother Ajax, one of the aristoi (“the best”) near the walls of Priam’s citadel. Teucer is only one of the many victims of the war she has caused. He brings news of the destruction that her bad name has brought upon her family and upon the Greek people in general,

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- 1 Helen appears as a character in two more of Euripides’ tragedies: *Trojan Women* (860–1059) and *Orestes* (71–131), which favor the Homeric version. As for Helen in *Trojan Women*, see above, pp. 47–8. In *Orestes* she is the frivolous wife of Menelaus, who resumes her role of queen at Sparta but finds herself in danger when she is used as a trump to blackmail her husband (l. 1105). However, the gods once again whisk her away from Orestes and Pylades who are threatening her life (l. 1497). Rather than a ghost or simulacrum, all that remains of Helen in the *Orestes*, through a divine miracle, is an inaccessible image offered in an epiphany (ll. 1629–43). In Euripides, *Electra* 1280–3, the Dioscuri, appearing *ex machina*, prophesy the future version of *Helen*: her exile in Egypt under the protection of Proteus and her duplication through a ghost at Troy, the work of Zeus to cause a murderous war. On *Electra*, see below, pp. 202–37.
- 2 The gods gave her a role designed to bring about universal equilibrium, by causing a war that will relieve the problem of overpopulation that is afflicting humanity (*Helen* 36–40).

for the whole of society has felt the effects of her foolishness. When later destiny brings Menelaus to the coast of Egypt, there is an emotional reunion, after which they organize and carry out a plan for escape. This involves the two Egyptians that appear in the play: Theonoe, the daughter of Proteus and a respected prophetess, is persuaded to help them through supplication, and Theoclymenus, who is deceived into supporting their escape. The plot, with many features of romance and adventure, is sustained by a series of antitheses, such as truth versus appearance and ignorance versus knowledge. This is the dramatic consequence of the duplication of figures and circumstances: the true Helen and her ghost; the illustrious Menelaus and the shipwreck survivor that he becomes; their experience in Egypt in what is almost like a new Trojan war, in order to clarify their identities and ensure that the King of Sparta's beautiful and faithful wife is returned to him. We are presented with an illusory 'reality' that is in constant conflict with the true identity to which only the spirit has access. Another antithesis marks the tone of the play from the very first scene, namely the opposition between life and death. Helen's life and salvation depend upon the tomb (unmistakeable symbol of death) in which she shelters, and upon Proteus, who continues to protect her after death. Similarly, the fugitives' deceit, which enables them to recover their true identities and return to Sparta happily, depends upon the false news of Menelaus' death, which he himself undertakes to transmit, "without having died, dead in words" (Euripides, Helen 1050, 1052). There is a happy ending for the protagonists after their many adventures, assured by Hermes, who, on behalf of Hera, has been pulling the strings since the start of the play (ll. 56–8). But it is not only the gods that intervene; men also play an active role in bringing about their destiny. Replacing Menelaus' military skills, Helen's ability to deceive and persuade is the decisive key to the successful outcome of the plot. This montage offers a powerful stimulus for the reinterpretation of past tradition, in accordance with a new kind of intelligence—one for which the Sophists had been largely responsible.

In Literature

Euripides' narrative is closer to the versions by the poet Stesichorus of Himera (6th century BC) and the historian Herodotus (5th century BC) than to Homer's (ca. 8th century BC), which serves as a counterpoint to it. However, Helen's journey through Egypt was known from the Homeric Poems: with Menelaus on the way back to Sparta after the war, she lands there (*Odyssey* 3. 276–300, 4. 125–32, 219–32, 351–66, 431–59, 473–80). Visiting the courts of Nestor and Menelaus, in an attempt to discover the whereabouts of his father Odysseus, who has not yet returned from Troy, Telemachus is told various accounts of this trip (*Odyssey* 3

and 4). First, he hears from Nestor about the storm that carried Menelaus and his companions to Egypt; then, in Menelaus' own court, he sees Helen, amidst the pomp of a great lady and surrounded by precious objects, given to her by the Pharaoh during her visit to Egypt. From Menelaus himself he hears the difficulties of their departure from Pharos, barred by adverse winds. They are saved by the divine "Eidothea, daughter of Proteus, the powerful Old Man of the Sea" (*Odyssey* 4. 365), who gives him access to the wise prophesies of her father. Euripides takes up these motifs, but introduces innovations.³

It was certainly Stesichorus who broke with the epic tradition in his *Palinode*.⁴ After insulting Helen, the poet realizes that the blindness that afflicts him must be a punishment for the slander.⁵ He thus composes some lines (or adds them to the same poem)⁶ describing how Helen never set sail or went to Troy, and how the war was fought over her ghost,⁷ while she remained in Egypt with Proteus.⁸ This is the most radical exoneration of Helen.

Herodotus (2. 112–20) adopts a similar version but in a more rational form. He omits the part about Helen's innocence (she submits to her Trojan kidnapper) and the phantom (the 'illusion' exists only in the imagination of the Greeks, who continue to judge her in Troy), but repeats that she never set foot on Trojan soil. Rather she stayed in Egypt with Proteus, who wished to

3 The two Egyptian characters, Theonoe and Theoclymenus, were probably invented by Euripides. The model for Theonoe was Eidothea, daughter of Proteus, in the epic tradition the Old Man of the Sea (*Odyssey* 4. 365–424). But with Euripides, Proteus become a king and his daughter a mortal, though endowed with prophetic gifts (*Helen* 10–15).

4 See Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a, *Republic* 586c; Isocrates, *Encomium of Helen* 10. 64 (on which, also, below n. 11); Stesichorus, *fr.* 187–93 (Page 1962); Horace, *Epodes* 17. 42–4. *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 2506 (Page 1962) speaks of two *Palinodes*, one countering Homer and the other Hesiod. Gentili (1984) 166–7 n. 27 argues that there were two *Palinodes*, the first denying that Helen ever arrived at Troy and claiming that she stayed in Egypt, the second asserting that she had never left Sparta. See Dale (1967) xx–xxii; Allan (2008) 20. Despite the popularity of the Homeric version, Stesichorus' also left a mark upon Antiquity (cf. Dio Chrysostomus 11. 182). The reference in Horace is the only one known in Latin literature to this version of the myth.

5 There was a legend (recounted by Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a) that Stesichorus' blindness was the result of divine vengeance after he insulted Helen, and that he recovered his sight after withdrawing these accusations.

6 Allan (2008) 20 considers the two motifs part of a single poem: the introductory part used the accusatory version and described the consequences for the poet; the second revised the motif, exonerating Helen.

7 Hesiod (*fr.* 358 Merkelbach-West) had perhaps already used the motif of the *eidolon*.

8 The 2nd-century BC mitographer Apollodorus of Athens also says that it was Hermes who took Helen to Egypt and entrusted her to Proteus: Apollodorus, *Epitome* 3. 5.

guard her and the treasures that accompanied her until her husband came to reclaim her. In endorsing the antiquity of the Egyptian version, Herodotus claims: "I am convinced that Homer also knew this story; but as it was not so suitable for epic as the version that he used, he put it aside, though hinted that he knew it too" (2. 116).⁹ Perhaps Helen's divine nature justifies the appearance of a virtuous alternative.

The historians Hecataeus (5th century BC) and Hellanicus (6th–5th century BC),¹⁰ both insist that Menelaus and Helen went to Egypt on their way back from Troy. In Hecataeus, they stay with the pharaoh Thonis, while Hellanicus adds that the king tried to seduce Helen and was consequently killed by Menelaus. These testimonies indicate the popularity of the motif, with its variants.

Among the Sophists, the 5th-century 'new Intellectuals', the myth of Helen became a pretext for rhetorical exercises that challenged and subverted ancient cultural assumptions. Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, which probably precedes Euripides' play (ca. 427–413 BC), praises Helen and defends her against the customary accusations. It uses arguments of *force majeure* to deny the traditional narrative: that is to say, if Helen's flight had resulted from fate (τύχη), violence (βία), persuasion (πειθώ) or love (ἔρως), all of which are irresistible, then Helen, who was a simple human creature, could not be held responsible. Therefore, by subjecting the traditional story to the persuasion of *logos* ("argument"), Gorgias clears Helen of blame and praises her.¹¹

The first sign of the success and impact of Euripides' play comes in the Aristophanes' comedy *Women at the Thesmophoria* (411 BC), with the parody of the "recent", "new-fangled" *Helen* (Aristophanes, *Women at the Thesmophoria* 850). The adjective *καίνῃ* ("new, recent") may not only be referring to the proximity of the date (412 BC). Euripides' play was not only 'recent' in this sense; it was also 'innovative', introducing sensational *new* dimensions into the myth and into the narrative form that it adopted. In the comedy, the character Mnesilochus (Euripides' relative), held captive by women, revives

9 All translations from any language other than English are mine unless differently indicated in the notes.

10 References are to *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 1F 307–9 (for Hecataeus) and 4F 153 (for Hellanicus).

11 Dale (1967) viii points out that Gorgias effectively 'rehabilitates' the Homeric Helen, showing the power of the word in bringing about veritable 'miracles'. The orator Isocrates (5th–4th century BC), alluding to Gorgias, dedicates a 'true' eulogy to Helen (10. 14); he does not defend her, but praises her because the war brought Greece benefits and ensured its freedom from the barbarians. But there is no mention of Euripides' *Helen*, or of the Egyptian version, in this speech.

passages from *Helen* to call for help, namely: the opening monologue, which places the heroine in Egypt, near the tomb of Proteus, harassed by the new pharaoh Theoclymenus (Euripides, *Helen* 1–68; cf. Aristophanes, *Women at the Thesmophoria* 855–73); and the *anagnorisis* (“recognition”) which reunites the royal couple from Sparta for flight and salvation (Euripides, *Helen* 459–66, 558–66; cf. Aristophanes, *Women at the Thesmophoria* 877–916). Aristophanes emphasizes romance as the novelty feature common to both moments, expressed by the opening monologue and the lines of recognition, constant in Euripides’ ‘tragedies of escape’.

It was because of this formal and thematic novelty that *Helen*, like Euripides’ other ‘Romanesque plays’, became important, not only for direct borrowings but also as indirect source of inspiration for subsequent genres. It influenced, for example, the so-called New Comedy (4th–3rd century BC), and later, the novel, which was very popular in Hellenistic times (4th–1st century BC). Satyrus’s *Life of Euripides*¹² underlines the importance of this influence with regard to conventional motifs, such as kidnappings, recognition scenes and intrigues that have an intense and unpredictable rhythm.¹³

In the 4th century BC, *Helen* appears in some titles of dramatic literature, although we do not know which version they contained. However, Euripides was very influential in the following century. Compared to his great rivals, Aeschylus and Sophocles, Euripides had the advantage of offering more accessible models to a public that had received a less focused education and had a new taste for the emotive. In tragedy, Theodectes produced a *Helen*,¹⁴ while the cynic Diogenes of Sinope had another play with the same title,¹⁵ of which nothing remains. The Middle and New Comedy (4th–mid-3rd century BC) showed great interest in mythological intrigue, parodying the myths or tragedies based on them. In Middle Comedy, Alexis (*fr.* 70 Kassel-Austin)¹⁶ and Anaxandrides (*fr.* 12 Kassel-Austin) both produced a version of *Helen*. Menander, the most well-known poet of the New Comedy, in a paratragic context, says: “DAOS: Your

12 *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 1176§10, *fr.* 39 v1 = Kovacs (1994) 19. On Satyrus’ *Life of Euripides* see, also, above, pp. 1–5.

13 Wright (2005) 12 claims: “The plot elements outlined here may indeed have become characteristic features of romance, which means that any history of the development of the romantic genre may include *Helen*”.

14 Snell (1986) 231.

15 Snell (1986) 254.

16 To the title *Helen*, Alexis adds two more, *The Abduction of Helen* (*fr.* 71–2 Kassel-Austin) and *The Suitors of Helen* (*fr.* 73–5 Kassel-Austin) possibly variants of a single work.

brother—Oh Zeus, how to say this?—is, so to speak, dead,” (*Aspis* 420–1). This is a quotation from Euripides’ *Helen* 1196—“HELEN: Menelaus—Oh dear, how to say this?—he died”. In Menander, the context is domestic, but it involves a deception (Helen’s in Euripides, and now one of the slave Daos), in order to avoid an unwanted marriage. The suitor to be punished, rather than the pharaoh in love with Helen, is now Smicrines, an old man who declares that he will marry a young woman for money. In both cases, simulated death is used to deceive the villain.

In the Hellenistic Period, the tragic poet and grammarian Lycophron (3rd century BC) composed a dramatic monologue called *Alexandra*,¹⁷ in which a slave, charged with watching over Cassandra, tells Priam of the princess’ prophecies about the destruction of Troy. Lycophron keeps Helen out of the conflict. After Paris has abducted her from Sparta, he loses her to Proteus on the journey through Egypt. It is Proteus that replaces Helen with a ghost (*Alexandra* 112–43), and so it is in the company of a ghost that Paris sails to Troy. After the city has been destroyed, the ghost disappears¹⁸ and Menelaus realizes the deception (*Alexandra* 820–4), which, in Euripides, it happens only after his arrival in Egypt. In Lycophron, the real Helen is not blameless because she victimizes Menelaus when she flees with Paris (*Alexandra* 850–1).¹⁹

Although in Latin literature, the Trojan version of the Helen myth is clearly preferred, Ovid’s treatment of the theme in *Heroides* (“Letters of Heroines”) 16–17 (one letter from Paris to Helen and Helen’s reply) nevertheless warrants some attention. The Roman poet (1st century BC–1st century AD) mostly follows the most popular version in the two letters between Paris and Helen, but things are still left open. The adultery is planned and discussed, but never actually consummated. For Paris it remains above all “a hope” (*spem*, 17. 22, 74, 110, 112, 236), while Helen puts up resistance, opposing his protestations of war and seduction with the barrier of virtue. *Pudor* (i.e., “chastity”) (17. 15, 69, 98, 116, 261), as the feminine *arête* (i.e., “excellence”) is her weapon of defence. Like the Egyptian Helen, the Ovidian one fights to keep her “reputation” (*fama*, 17. 19, 169–172, 209–212) and “name” (*nomen*, 17. 36, 44) untarnished. There seem to be

17 Fusillo (1984) explores the text’s relationship with various models, particularly epic and drama (‘a typical case of genre contamination’).

18 In Lycophron Cassandra’s reference to the disappearance of the ghost (*Alexandra* 822) is similar to the words with which in Euripides the slave announces the same event (*Helen* 605).

19 Oswald (1905) 106–7: Lycophron’s narrative was later edited and commented by Tzetzes in the 12th century, and was published in Venice during the Renaissance (1515).

echoes of Euripides' *Helen* (42–3, 66–7), in the antinomy between “person” and *doxa* or *fama* (“reputation”) used by Ovid.

In the treatments of Helen figure in general, the Trojan version was clearly more popular than the Egyptian one. The centrality of the adultery, compared to the virtuous Helen version, may in part justify this preference. From the culturalist perspective, the Trojan version was associated to the heroic context, with its emphasis upon masculine values. But this was subverted in the Egyptian version, which questioned the merits obtained in combat (the values of an archaic *time*, “merit”) and condemned the war, waged over a phantom, as a simple illusion, reprehensible and senseless. Diachronically, the treatments of the Helen episode documents a development in mentality and a cultural dialogue between different periods and opposing conceptions of life in society. Constantly revised and adapted over the millennia, the story however follows the Homeric model as faithfully as possible.

Euripides' *Helen*, like his other tragedies of escape, was not welcomed as warmly as the ‘grand tragedies’ (such as *Medea* or *Hippolytus*) over the ensuing centuries, despite its success with the contemporary public. To posterity, the tragedies of escape did not seem properly tragic, perhaps even anti-tragic. For this reason, their transmission and reception were clearly more limited. As for *Helen*, however, it should be noted that the variety of its literary components—such as epic, lyric, drama, and romance—and of their related themes (war, love, deception) opened up the way to a diversified type of adaptations. Some adaptations, for instance, gave priority to the senselessness of war (in the form of a dispute over a phantom); this typically has been coinciding, over the centuries, with moments of crisis or conflict. Other adaptations emphasized one of the most innovative, attractive features, i.e., love, particularly as the virtuous Helen, offset by the guilty one, could become the paradigm of love, and inform the paradigm with some of the contradictions characterizing the passion itself. The conflict between *doxa*, *fama* or *nomen* (“fame, reputation or name”), and *soma* (“the person”), which substantiates one of the essential antitheses in the Greek play, was also a vital feature often occurring in some adaptations. The exotic setting in Egypt was a constant in this kind of adaptations; indeed, much of the depiction of the heroine's exposure or fragility depends upon the ‘place’. Furthermore, elements such as ‘exile’, ‘recognition’, and ‘flight’ were connected to the innovative version of the myth inaugurated by Euripides, and gave it a lasting appeal. However, all the essential, innovative traits of Euripides' play, which each, to a different degree, had been ‘adapted’, have been in constant rivalry with the Homeric version. This may justify, in some way, the fact that Euripides' *Helena* did not enjoy the same kind of transmission and reception as some others of his plays.

The Middle Ages produced a narrow reading of the figure of Helen, as a symbol of dangerous beauty that tempts the soul towards sin.²⁰ The Renaissance, on the contrary, produced a broader interpretation. The greater circulation of dramatic texts contributed to this situation, although Euripides' *Helen* continued to be relatively obscure. The first 16th-century rewriting was not a dramatic work but poetry:²¹ *Sonnets pour Hélène* ("Sonnets for Helena") by Pierre de Ronsard in France (1578).²² In addition to his interest in Greek tragedy, Ronsard was also on friendly terms with Jean-Antoine de Baif, another member of the Pléiade²³ who had translated the opening monologue of Euripides' *Helen* (1573). The contradiction between the two versions of the myth (*forme douteuse*, "questionable form," *Sonnet* 2. 42. 5) enables Ronsard to express his conflicting feelings towards his own beloved, Hélène de Surgères, a lady of the court. Some of the sonnets are very suggestive. For example, *Sonnet* 1. 3 (cf. 2. 9, 2. 55) revives the question of the fatal 'name' of Helen (the name of his beloved and a mask for contradictory identities, betrayal and fidelity):

20 Heavey (2008) 4–20. As ancient Greek was not well known in the Middle Ages, the main sources about the myth of Helen came from the Latin versions, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Heroides* ("Letters of Heroines"). To this tradition, Medieval authors added their own vision and the marks of their time. The Euripidean version did not have any presence in these recreations. We may take as an example two 12th-century authors—Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le Roman de Troie* ("The Romance of Troy," 1160) and John of Exeter, *On the Trojan war* (1180)—who, coming back to the legend of Troy, changed deeply the figure of Helen. Joseph of Exeter underlined her main vices, ambition and sexual desire. Benoît de Sainte-Maure, however, made a much more passive Helen; in this case she is not fascinated by power or wealth, but by Paris' love and seduction. In the thirteenth century, in Italy, Guido de Columnis made a translation to Latin of the poem of Benoît, as a prose narrative entitled *Historia Destructionis Troiae* ("The story of the Fall of Troy," 1287), inserting in it clear misogynist additions. The influence of Guido de Columnis on European authors, such as the Italian Giovanni Boccaccio, *De claris mulieribus* ("On famous women," 1374) was great. In 14th–15th-centuries England, these creations influenced authors like John Clerk, *The destruction of Troy* (ca. 1540).

21 Maguire (2009) 8 also mentions the adaptation of the Egyptian version of Helen in the English poet Spenser's *Fairie Queene* (1590), in his 'Florimell/Marinell sequence'.

22 Céard/Ménager/Simonin (1993) 339–435.

23 This is the name given to a group of poets belonging to the French Renaissance (16th century), such as Pierre de Ronsard, Jean-Antoine de Baif and Joachim du Bellay. The name referred to the Alexandrian Pleiad of seven Alexandrian poets and tragedians (3rd century BC).

*Nom, malheur des Troyens, sujet de mon souci,
 ma sage Penelope et mon Helene aussi,
 qui d'un soin amoureux tout le coeur m'envelope:
 Nom, qui m'a jusqu'au ciel de la terre enlevé,
 qui eust jamais pensé que j'eusse retrouvé
 en une mesme Helene une autre Penelope?*

That name, curse of the Trojans, subject of my concern
 my wise Penelope and my Helen too,
 who has enveloped my heart in loving care:
 That name, which has raised me from the earth right up to the sky,
 who would ever have thought that I would find
 in a single Helen another Penelope?

In the *Sonnet* 1. 60, centred on the *eidolon*, the poet, in the guise of Paris, seeks the illusory satisfaction of his love:

*Je reviendray demain. Mais si la nuict, qui ronge
 mon coeur, me la donnoit par songe entre mes bras,
 embrassant pour le vray l'idole du mensonge,
 soulé d'un faux plaisir je ne reviendrois pas.
 Voyez combien ma vie est pleine de trespas,
 quand tout mon reconfort ne dépend que du songe!*

I will return tomorrow. But if the night that gnaws
 at my heart should give me her in a dream in my arms
 embracing for the real idol of the lie,
 gluttoned on a false pleasure I would not return.
 Look how my life is full of death,
 when my whole comfort depends only on a dream!²⁴

In the 20th century, the most famous text on this subject is the 68-line poem *Helena* by George Seferis, a Greek poet and diplomat, Nobel laureate, composed in Cyprus (1953). It is included in his collection *Hemerológio Katastrómatos III* ("Logbook" 111), dedicated to the island.²⁵ Years later (1955)

24 The 'portrait' as substitute for Helen is frequent in Ronsard: see, e.g., *Sonnet* 1. 28; *Sonnet* 2. 18.

25 Seferis, who visited Cyprus three times between 1953 and 1955, described his (human, cultural, historical and topographical) impressions of the place in his poems.

it reappeared in a poetry collection, whose Greek title may be translated as *Cyprus, where it was decreed*²⁶ (a quotation from Teucer in Euripides, *Helen* 148).²⁷ The title and epigraph indicate that it draws upon Euripides' play. The poem is, in fact, preceded by three quotations from the tragedy, which define its central themes: Teucer's speech about how Cyprus is his place of destiny (Euripides, *Helen* 148–50); Helen's reference to the phantom in Troy (Euripides, *Helen* 582); and a messenger or servant lamenting the senselessness of the war (Euripides, *Helen* 706–7). Cyprus is identified, with the emphasis of a refrain ("The nightingales won't let you sleep in Platres,"²⁸ Seferis, 1, 9, 53), as the place that anchors the symbolic reflection in a concrete reality. In the reference to the nightingale's mournful song (Seferis, 2–8, 23, 51, 54, cf. Euripides, *Helen* 1107–21), the beauty of the island is overlain with nostalgia. Beauty and death are important themes. The mention of Platres also underlines an ambiguity in the names, which challenge us with their unfamiliarity or disturbing resonances:

What is Platres? Who knows this island?
 I have lived my life hearing names never heard:
 new places, new madnesses of men
 or of gods

(SEFERIS, 10–3; CF. EURIPIDES, *Helena* 487–99, 502).²⁹

This is followed by the fatal question, implicit in Euripides: "Truth, where's the truth?" (Seferis, 20, 29, 57–9). We arrive at the heart of the myth from the point of view of Teucer (Seferis, 13–6, 21–2), who suffered a personal blow in the war with the senseless loss of his brother (Seferis, 51).³⁰ Here too are the controversial worlds of Helen (Seferis, 32–6): Egypt, "by the shore of Proteus" (Seferis, 24–6, 28, 37), where a tormented woman denies the accusations against her with the words of Stesichorus' *Palinodes* (Seferis, 29–31; cf. Stesichorus, *fr.* 192);³¹ and Troy, the scene of the war in all its cruelty (Seferis, 42–6, 63), which was futile because it was waged for "nothing—just a phantom image", "all for a Helen" (Seferis, 38, 40–1, 48–50, 67–8) or for the whim of a divinity (Seferis, 39,

26 The collection was later included in *Piimata* (1981, repr.).

27 Here Teucer is alluding to the exile in Cyprus prophesied by Apollo when he was expelled from Salamis by Telamon, his father, after the suicide of his brother Ajax.

28 References are to *Summer resort on the island of Cyprus*. Transl. by Keeley, E. and Sherrard, Ph., 1996, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/181856>.

29 See also Seferis 60–2.

30 Seferis lost a brother in war in 1950: see Pociña (2013).

31 References about Stesichorus' fragments are to Page (1962).

52, 59; cf. Euripides, *Helen* 610, 930–1, 1137), a catastrophe that the poet hopes will never be repeated.

The Canadian Jay Macpherson (1957), a lyric poet and scholar at the University of Toronto, includes a *Helen* in her book of poems entitled *The Boatman*,³² whose opening lines make clear its sources:

... while Helen slept in Egypt, the cruel war,
roared, lashed and swallowed, spat up broken men.
But she knew nothing of this, lying withdrawn
far by the heaven-fed river, the holy stream.

The well-known American Hilda Doolittle, poet and novelist, entitled one of her 1st-person lyric poems *Helen in Egypt* (1961).³³ Divided into three books (*Palinode*, *Leuké* and *Eidolon*), it is constructed in three-line strophes, interrupted by notes in prose. In the preamble to Book 1 (1), the author identifies Stesichorus and Euripides as her sources. *Helen in Egypt* (at the temple of Amun) thinks of the events at Troy. Like her two Greek models, she contests the uselessness of war and the unjust censuring of her name, and she revives the world of the heroes with Achilles.³⁴ Now that the conflict is over, at peace, Helen rethinks her trajectory, “she and we need peace and time to reconstruct the legend” (11); “here in this Amun-temple, I have all time to remember” (11), and repeats a question without an answer, “who am I?” (16). Ghost or reality, she seeks, in the memory of a complex life, the truth behind the fame that has pursued her. The poem recapitulates a whole web of myths about the figure of Helen. *Leuké* and *Eidolon* are based on other episodes of the same myth. In the island of Leuké, Helen joins in marriage with Achilles, and bores him a son, Euphorion. From her experience in Egypt, she preserves a memory, as in a dream. Now she remembers several moments of the conventional story of Troy and repeats her old dilemma, the conflict between her *doxa* and her name, asking to herself: who is to blame as the cause of war?

As far as other world literatures are concerned, a mention should be done for the Iberoamerican literature. Here occurrences of this version of the myth seem to be occasional. There is, for example, the case of the short essay *El mito versiforme* (“The myth in polymorphic verse”), included in the series *El cielo de*

32 *The Boatman* is a sequence of epigrammatic poems. References are to Macpherson (1957), in Allan (2008) 80 n. 360.

33 References are to Doolittle (1961).

34 According to a late version, Helen appears attached to Achilles in a place similar to the Isle of the Blessed, ‘the fairest to the bravest’: see Dale (1967) vii.

esmalte ("The enamel sky") by the Venezuelan J. A. Ramos Sucre, a poet and professor (1929).³⁵ Confronted with a variety of readings, the poet is perplexed as to how to interpret the enigma of Helen, for it is difficult to distinguish the woman from all that has been said about her:

Helena se confunde al juzgar las fábulas imaginadas en su desdoro por los griegos versátiles. Aparece escondida en el reino de los egipcios y tributaria de su culto singular...

Helen becomes confused when we judge the imagined tales of her dishonor by the versatile Greeks. She appears hidden in the reign of the Egyptians, a tributary of her singular cult. . . .

Ramos Sucre discredits different known versions, saying: *Los griegos no alcanzan a esclarecer el portento de Helena* ("The Greeks did not manage to clarify the marvel that was Helen"), thus leaving open all possible interpretations.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

Despite the popularity that the Egyptian Helen had in the 4th century BC, the absence of this motif from vase paintings is noticeable.³⁶ It has also be observed that Euripides' *Helen* had no influence on iconography,³⁷ which is surprising as the other 'Romanesque plays' became very popular. This pattern continues in the subsequent centuries. In painting and sculpture, the kidnap of Helen by Paris continued to dominate,³⁸ alongside the simple valuing

35 Quotations are from Ramos Sucre (1989) 185.

36 Taplin (2007) 149; Wright (2005) 1–2.

37 According to Kahil, painters tended to prefer mythological topics such as the birth of Helen, her kidnap by Paris and reunion with Menelaus after the war: Kahil (1988) IV.1: 498–563.

38 There are several paintings and sculptures that testify to the motif over the centuries starting in particular from the 16th century. For a detailed list of paintings on the episode of Helen's kidnap, see Wiebenson, (1964); Maguire (2009) 1–2, 81–2. As for sculpture, some examples worthy of reference are: two marble busts by Antonio Canova (1807, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; 1812, Palazzo Albrizzi, Venice); another by John Gibson (ca. 1825–1830, Victoria and Albert Museum, London). On the representation of the myth of the War of Troy in another form of figurative art, namely, the medieval and Renaissance tapestry, see Scherer (1967); McKendrick, (1991).

of exceptional beauty centred exclusively on the representation of the queen of Sparta. The Egyptian version seems to have left no mark.

Music

Following the Renaissance divulgation of Classical tragedy, new stage versions of *Helen* appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries, with a strong musical element. For example, in 1659, an opera called *Elena* was performed in Italian in Venice (S. Cassiano Theatre); it was probably based on Euripides (composed by Pier Francesco Cavalli with libretto by Giovanni Faustini and Nicolò Minato). In the following century, in 1725, a new libretto (by the Italian Paolo Conversi) was used in a new version that was vaguely suggestive of the Euripides version, presented in the Regio Ducal Theatre, in Milan.³⁹ In the 19th century, Euripides' *Helen* returned to the stage in 1866 in a free musical adaptation of the renowned French composer Jacques Offenbach, i.e., *Fair Helen: a comic opera in three acts*, performed by the Shooting Stars Company in Oxford. But Offenbach's musical satire concerns the abduction of Helen by Paris. In the 20th century, Richard Strauss presented in Dresden (1928) the two-act opera *Die ägyptische Helena* ("The Egyptian Helen") with a libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (a new version of this opera appeared in 1933 in Salzburg). This combines the traditional readings: Helen, the adulteress, kidnapped by Paris and destroyer of Troy, who, at the end of the war, confronts Menelaus, bent on revenge. They were shipwrecked in Egypt on the way back to Sparta, where new suitors appear. Theirs is also a voyage to a tormented reconciliation. The *eidolon* is a device created by Aethra, an Egyptian sorceress who owns an omniscient seashell, which transmits news of the war. This *eidolon* would divert Menelaus' jealousy and persuade him of Helen's faithfulness. The traditional antithesis is revived in the unstable mind of the Menelaus, after he gives up his hero's glory to become an insecure lover (or, in a contemporary viewpoint, becoming a victim of the horrors of war). The reconciliation is not, for now, the result of deceit. The power of beauty, betrayal, vengeance, conjugal loyalty, appearance and truth are all at play in the libretto, topical themes in a post-war Europe that was in search of affection, fidelity and trust. The supernatural, which in Euripides is represented by Theonoe, is transferred to Aethra, the Egyptian sorceress, and also to the ghosts of Paris and Helen. But instability returns, specifically in the second Act, set in a distant place where the story repeats itself: Altair, lord of the Atlas mountains, and his son, Da-ud, reincarnating Proteus and Theoclymenus, overwhelmed by Helen's beauty, present

39 Information about stage versions, as music or theatre, is taken from the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama, at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/research-collections/performance-database/productions>.

themselves as rivals of Menelaus. Helen risks shouldering the guilt and decides to tell the truth, giving Menelaus the chance for an effective and conscious forgiveness. The presence of Hermione, the daughter of Menelaus and Helen, at the end legitimizes the happy family scene.⁴⁰

Euripides' original had also other musical adaptations in the 20th century: in 1970, a one-act opera by Jonathan Elkus, *Helen in Egypt*, was presented at the University of Wisconsin Opera Theatre, with libretto by J. Knight; while in 1977 there was a musical adaptation by L. Victor, performed by the Amas Repertory Theatre in New York, with musical direction by J. Brandon and choreography by B. Johnson (revived in 1979).

Dance

Euripides' *Helen* has also had some influence in the domain of dance.⁴¹ Recently (June 2013), at the Joyce Theater in New York, Pascal Rioult, an expert in contemporary dance, famous for his explorations of classical motives, presented *On distant shores—a redemption fantasy* (2011), inspired by the traditional blackening of Helen's name and her rehabilitation in the Egyptian version. Charis Haines' performance as Helen was highly praised by the critics. The scenery suggested the coast of Egypt, where four Trojan heroes land. After a solo in which Helen expresses suffering for the destruction caused in her name at Troy, she dances short duets with the four heroes.⁴²

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Although Euripides' *Helen* was scarcely known in England at the beginning of the 18th century,⁴³ it had an indirect influence in theatre in plays about female suffering. In the preface to *Love's Victim* (1701), inspired by *Alcestis*, Charles Gildon, an English essayist, poet and playwright, claimed to have included 'incidents' and 'sentiments' from Euripides' *Helen* and *Andromache*.

40 This opera underwent successive performances: in 1993 in the Megaron Mousikis Concert Hall in Athens; in 2002 in the Avery Fisher Hall in New York; in 2003 in the Aalto-Theater of Essen in Germany, and in the Felsenreitschule in Salzburg, among others.

41 Here, too, the Trojan version seems to have predominated. There was, for example, the character of Helen of Troy in Martha Graham's ballet *Clytemnestra*, presented for the first time in 1958 in New York at the Adelphi Theater.

42 <http://nycdancestuff.wordpress.com/2013/06/12/of-iphigenia-and-helen-of-troy-rioult-dance-new-york>

43 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 61, 65 n. 3, 71, 188 n. 7.

Later, in 1718, he suggested that *Alcestis* and *Helen* were good models for the depiction of conjugal love. In 18th-century Italy some attention started being paid to women's rights to education and culture. In 1721, Pier Jacopo Martello, an Italian poet and playwright, dedicated his tragedy *Elena casta* ("Helen the Chaste")⁴⁴ to Aretafila Savini de 'Rossi, a cultured lady and member of the *Accademia della' Arcadia*.⁴⁵ Euripides' Helen shared with the play's dedicatee the qualities of beauty, modesty, knowledge and loyalty, around which Martello built a love story with a happy ending. At the centre is an antithesis between exalted guilty passion and virtuous conjugal love. The affinities between Martello and Euripides are obvious, despite the liberties taken. Martello claimed to have been 'correcting' Euripides with reference to certain features. These corrections consist of renaming of the pharaoh, Polybus,⁴⁶ because of the inconvenient contrast that the meaning of the name Theoclymenus, "Respecter of the gods", expresses in relation to his behavior. He also claimed to have suppressed the portress, a feature that is too 'Greek' in the Egyptian context.⁴⁷ Theonoe also acquires a more central role. As priestess of the goddess Isis and respecter of justice and fraternity, she imposes moral rigor upon the action and paves the way for the happy ending by forcing her brother Polybus to behave respectfully towards the gods. She also promotes the salvation of Helen and Menelaus, who become a paradigm of conjugal love. A second wedding between Polybus and Oenone, Paris' widow, is one of the great innovations. Helen resists the king's advances and contributes to the salvation. But priority in the events is now given to Menelaus and Teucer, who, in this version, are the authors of the false account of the death of Menelaus. Polybus is aware of his mistake, and thus acquires a psychological flexibility that his Euripidean counterpart did not have. *Elena casta* is animated by a greater scenic fantasia than the one envisioned in Euripides, by putting the Dioscuri *ex machina* on stage. Oenone's entrance is magnificent (relevant in Lycophron), brought to Egypt by the goddess Minerva on a cloud. The presence of the *eidolon* on stage is also extraordinary.⁴⁸ In this adaptation the female characters'

44 Noce (1982).

45 Founded in Rome in 1690, the *Accademia dell' Arcadia* brought together a group of personalities from the literary world connected to the court of Cristina di Svezia. Its intention was to establish a new aesthetic standard opposed to the Baroque. The reference to Arcadia in the name aimed to evoke the 'bucolic simplicity' of a certain aesthetic taste.

46 Inspired by Homer's *Odyssey* 4. 125, which refers to Helen's passage through Egypt with Menelaus.

47 Cf. Euripides, *Helen* 437–82.

48 Morenilla/Bañuls (2012) 381–99.

merits are a central motif: it is they who impose religious and social values and sets the men once more upon the right path.

In the 19th century, the so-called 'Act of Helen' was published (1827)⁴⁹ under the title *Helena: A Classical-Romantic Phantasmagoria. Intermezzo for Faust*, and then (1832) incorporated by the well-known German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe into *Faust*, Part II, Act III.⁵⁰ This episode brings about a kind of double fusion: one is between two cultural worlds (Greek and German), the other is between two historical periods (Antiquity and Medieval). Faust is either an embodiment of human genius in search of progress and the spirit of the Renaissance seeking Classical beauty. Helen, the incarnation of the Greek spirit, intervenes in the story when, at the end of the Trojan War, she returns to Sparta. Threatened with death by a vengeful Menelaus, she is rescued by Faust and goes with him to a Medieval castle in the Peloponnese where they share an idyllic love. From their love Euphorion is born, thus representing the bonding of Antiquity with Modernity. With the death of Euphorion, the magical union comes to an end: Helen leaves for the land of dead, Faust to his homeland. Man's encounters with the ancient paradigm of beauty are left behind. Goethe turns Helen from a symbol of lust into a figure with a dual identity on the foot-step of Euripides (*Faust* 8872–75).

We might wonder: Is Helen a real woman, with all her charms and sufferings, or a fantasy, a phantom of beauty? Euripides receives only a slight mention from Goethe, as he did not find this playwright's romances very appealing.

The 19th-century American and British stage showed some interest in Euripides' *Helen*, although there were considerable changes made in some of the performances produced. For example, in 1882, an adaptation of Euripides' *Helen in Egypt* was staged in Oxford (UK) by J. P. Lavallin:⁵¹ the scene takes place before the temple of Osiris and follows the original in theme and structure. But there is one and important innovation: Theonoe kills her brother by drugging him, in order to make easier the escape, before blessing Menelaus' and Helen's departure. A few years later, in 1886 (and again in 1890), John Todhunter, an Irish poet, playwright and essayist, staged *Helena in Troas* in Hengler's Circus, London, in the form of a Greek Tragedy with some features of Euripides' original.

49 There were numerous editions and commentaries on the play in the 19th century, indicating a growing interest in it: e. g., G. Hermann, 1837; C. Bradham, 1851; F. A. Paley, 1874; S. Jerram, 1892; H. Van Herwerden, 1895; N. Wecklein, 1898–1907.

50 There had been an earlier dramatization of the Faust theme in 1594 by Christopher Marlowe (*The tragic history of Doctor Faustus*).

51 Lavallin (1882).

Despite the interest in ancient drama in 20th-century Europe,⁵² Euripides' *Helen* did not attract much attention at first.⁵³ After the Second World War, there started to be some interest in the play in different contexts and perspectives, perhaps in part because of the implicit criticism of the uselessness of war in Euripides' original as a first step for the originality of *Helen* being rediscovered.

In London (1958), the English poet and translator John Heath-Stubbs produced a three-act romantic comedy called *Helen in Egypt*.⁵⁴ Set in Egypt, this version focuses on two traditional themes: the sense of history and nature of truth. Menelaus arrives in Egypt with the ghost of Helen, as the real Helen had already arrived there with Paris, fleeing Menelaus. On the Egyptian side, Theonoe is the priestess, close to a Helen that is now a mature woman. The pharaoh, here happy to reunite the Spartan couple, had imprisoned her in a tomb keeping her between life and death, in a kind of limbo. The climax brings together Helen, the real woman marked by time, and her ghost, the image of flawless youth. It is in Egypt that the ghost, nourished by her love of Menelaus and by the blood spilt in Troy, confronts her own identity as a simple fallacy and fades away so that truth can prevail.

In particular in the second half of the century, Euripides' *Helen* enjoyed a discrete success for it was often included in the programme of classical theatre festivals, above all in Greece. For instance, it was performed by the National Theatre of Greece in festivals at Athens and Epidaurus in 1963 and 1977, and in 1982–1983 by the State Theatre of Northern Greece (a performance that was revived in 1985–1986). In 1999, the Amphi-Theatro of Spyros Evangelatos also presented it in the festival of Epidaurus.⁵⁵ Beside restaging Euripides' original in festivals, other Greek performances put on adaptations of the ancient tragedy. Some of them were very intriguing. This is the case of *Christos Paschon*, a version of the passion of Christ, performed by a theatre group well known in

52 The interest in the play has justified new editions and commentaries: e.g., A. C. Pearson, 1903; G. Murray, 1913; A. Y. Campbell, 1950; A. M. Dale, 1967; R. Kannicht, 1969; J. Diggle, 1994.

53 In his study on the performance of Classical works in various European countries, Flashar (1991) notes the absence of Euripides' *Helen* from the stage until the end of the Second World War.

54 Heath-Stubbs (1958).

55 For more information, see the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk). Something similar occurred in other countries. For example, in 1978, the play was included in the Cycle of Classical Spectacles by the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico of Syracuse (Italy), an Italian famous organization of classical performances and other cultural activities related with Greek and Roman theatre.

Greece, Theatriki Leschi ("A Theater Club")⁵⁶ in Volos in 1997. This play used passages from various Euripidean tragedies, including *Helen*.

In this same period, i.e., in the second half of the 20th century, many productions of the play also took place in the United Kingdom and United States. In particular, the translation of Philip Vellacott (1954), a distinguished British scholar of Classics, seems to have enjoyed some popularity among theatre groups, which made use of it quite frequently. It is in Vellacott's translation, indeed, that Euripides' *Helen* was performed as a radio play in 1954 by the BBC. The original Greek was occasionally used as language of performance in academic initiatives, such as the production put on by Brasenose College, Oxford (1974–1975). The peculiar versatility of the play allowed directors and theatre companies to turn it in to a comedy. This is the case, for instance, of a production set by the Repertory Company at the University of Louisville (Kentucky, USA) in 1955.

Interest in Euripides' *Helen* visibly increased in the 21st century American stage.⁵⁷ A play by the American Ellen McLaughlin, *Helen*, was performed at The New York Public Theater in 2002. McLaughlin is a professor of Greek drama and a famous playwright, director and actress, who has been devoting great attention to Greek myths and tragedy. *Helen* focuses on contemporary female paradigms, such as Marilyn Monroe. But Euripides' model is unmistakable: Helen is displaced to an Egyptian hotel during the First World War, where she awaits, in a great isolation, the return of Menelaus. The setting is modern, with the Weather Channel on TV and talk of Afghan refugees. Civic suffering and war's uselessness are at stake, as in the Euripidean original. Antithetical choices inspired by Euripides once again appear: for the warrior, the challenge lies between the true Helen and her image; for Helen herself, the choice is between mythical appearances or a 'real' but anonymous life.⁵⁸ The nymph Io and the goddess Athena (as Euripides' Teucer), in their meeting

56 It is a famous Greek theatre group established in Volos, that has been presenting a large amount of classical and contemporary plays, in Greece and abroad, under the direction of Spyros Vrachoritis.

57 The universities maintained their usual interest in the play both in Europe and in the United States. In 2005, the Selene Group directed by J. L. Navarro presented it in Madrid at the Carlos III Secondary School and then in other cities in Spain and Portugal. In 2008, it was put on by the University of California, Department of Theatre Arts, in a translation by M.-K. Gamel, while other productions took place in theatre school festivals aimed at the younger students.

58 Foley (2004) 104–5.

with the exiled woman, contribute to the symbolism of the play.⁵⁹ To a certain immobility of the action corresponds much more talk, expressed by different models (myths, news, gossip), creating a sense of expectation. Much of the stories that her Servant—who, in her exile, is her only contact with human beings—tells Helen are suggestive comments on her personal situation. But once again, as in Euripides' original, *doxa* ("popular opinion/what it seems") creates a false image about her that distorts the real one. Helen's own passivity is also responsible for it. Another interesting adaptation, of Euripides' *Helen* in the United States is the one presented in the 2003, by the Leonidas-Eftychia Loizides Theatre Group, in the La MaMa etc. (Experimental Theater Club).⁶⁰ Its peculiar feature consists of a fusion of different ancient Greek sources. Together with Euripides' *Helen*, in fact, passages from the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and Robert Graves' *The Fall and Sack of Troy* were used. This fusion would suggest a *mélange* of the two versions of the myth. This production maintains—in the style of performance and language—costumes, attitudes, invocations to distant gods, elevated words, an allusion to ancient past, establishing some distance with modern audiences.

On the European stage, among the 21st-century adaptations of Euripides' *Helen*, a mention should be reserved for the Portuguese *Perdoar Helena* ("Forgiving Helen") by the professor and poet José Tolentino de Mendonça, staged at Lisbon, Teatro Taborda, in 2005, and *O rancor* ("Rancour") by the novelist and poet Hélia Correia, put on at Espaço das Aguncheiras in 2006. *Perdoar Helena*⁶¹ by José Tolentino de Mendonça consists of a dialogue between two anonymous figures, a stage director and an actor. The former is motivated to try to stage *Helen*, which fascinates him. The conversation focuses upon the merits of Euripides' creation, exploring the themes of forgiveness, responsibility, guilt and fate, and denouncing the war as a mistake, triggered by deceit and the quest for truth. On the opposite side, in *O rancor* ("Rancour") by Hélia Correia, not forgiveness but persisting hatred is the central motif.⁶² The context is the

59 Foley (2004) 105 says: "Io, another mythical sexually harassed victim of divine violence, who stands in part for the world's nomadic female refugees, and the goddess Athena, who, like Menelaus, illuminates the futility of wars".

60 It is an experimental group of theatre in New York, founded in 1961, whose interest, as said in its official site, "has been in the people who make art, and it is to them that we give our support with free theatre and rehearsal space, lights, sound, props, platforms, and whatever else we have that they can use to create their work. We want them to feel free to explore their ideas, and translate them into a theatrical language that can communicate to any person in any part of the world".

61 Mendonça (2005).

62 Correia (2006). All page numbers quoted above refer to this book.

Odyssey 4. 1–305, 312–619, when the royal couple has returned to Sparta after the end of the war. On the day of their reception, Telemachus arrives seeking news of Odysseus, fascinated by the possibility both of confronting the myths of the past that have peopled his imagination and of being able to see Helen's famous blonde tresses. But the queen that appears in the room has an Egyptian coiffure. Pulling this off, in the expectation that it hides the blonde locks of the epic, he finds that Helen's head is shaved (pp. 43–6). That is to say, each person may construct his own Helen for him/herself, out of a detail of characterization. Those who have a more traditional sensibility will try, like Telemachus, to find in this Portuguese Helen the Homeric one, with her blonde tresses; while others, those who prefer the Euripidean version, will identify the victim of a bad *doxa* ("fame/popular opinion" "reputation") through her Egyptian coiffure. *Rancour* is the concept that corresponds, in Hélia Correia, to this traditional *doxa*, which justifies the hatred against Helen (p. 41): "It is not removed from the dreams that join the Greeks and Trojans, the dreams of great hatred of Helen".

More recently, in 2011, Miguel del Arco directed the show *Juicio a una zorra*⁶³ ("Judgement of a bitch"), a monologue performed by the actress Carmen Machi, which premiered at the 42nd Mérida Festival and was later presented in 2013 at the Teatro de la Abadía in Madrid. The director admitted that, in addition to the Homeric poems, he had drawn upon Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* and Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Helen*, in order to compose a monologue in which this always-vilified woman vindicates her dignity and gives her own version of her behavior. The play was accompanied by songs by Marino Marini and arrangements by Arnau Vilà of themes from *La Belle Hélène* by Offenbach.

Screen

In cinema Euripides' *Helen* has had little uptake.⁶⁴ So far, I could find only three screen-adaptations. In 1962, Claude Dagues, director and writer, directed in France a television film, *Hélène*, based on Euripides, with a text by Jean

63 Information from the programme for the show: see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQRJPttjpFg&noredirect=1>

64 The various cinema and television productions focus on the Trojan version. According to Rodrigues (2012) 29: 'All the films on the subject of Helen of Troy are organized around at least one of these topics': the kidnapping of Helen; her arrival at Troy and the attack of the Achaeans; the destruction of the city. On this kind of TV and cinematic versions of an Helen, who is more Homeric than Euripidean, see Winkler (2009); Rodrigues (2012). There is no information about Helen in the more specific works dedicated to Greek tragedy and Euripides in cinema, such as McDonald (1983); MacKinnon (1986).

Canolle. In 1964, Giorgio Ferroni reused the Trojan War motif (which he had presented in 1961 in *Trojan Horse*) in *The Lion of Thebes*. Although he insists on the burning and sacking of Troy, he complements it with motifs from Euripides' *nostos* ("homecoming") of Menelaus. With Arion, one of Menelaus' soldiers, Helen, convinced that both are the only survivors of shipwreck on their way back from Troy, lands in a country that is divided between the pharaohs of Upper and Lower Egypt. Helen and then Menelaus, who has also been saved from a shipwreck, have roles in the crisis: Helen as an object of passion, Menelaus in political disputes. Helen, unlike her ambitious husband, is a peace-loving person and wants nothing more than to return to Sparta.⁶⁵ Finally, in 1970, Georg Madeja and Walter Czaschke, director and actor, produced in Austria *Die Helena des Euripides* ("Euripides' Helen"), from an adaptation by Kurt Klinger.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Helen*

A survey of the reception of the 'Helen' theme, even specifying Euripides' version, cannot fail to mention a cluster of works that reflect on the way the myth has been treated over time. These studies, which have made important contributions from the perspective of reception, include Prost (1977); Reid (1993) I, which focuses on opera and painting; Austin (1994); Gumpert (2001); Bettini and Brillante (2002); Frenzel (2005) 315–20; Hughes (2005); Bañuls *et al.* (2007); Maguire (2009).

One of the great debates among modern scholars and commentators of *Helen* concerns the play's thematic and formal anti-conventionalism compared to the more severe and emotionally more charged tragedy. There are a number of very challenging texts on Euripides' so-called 'Romanesque tragedies', which are of great interest to understand the innovative characteristics that have affected the work's future reception. Examples include: the article by Knox (1979) 250–74; Segal (1971) 553–614. Particularly interesting is the book by Wright (2005), which not only reflects exhaustively about the features that characterize Euripides' romance plays in general, but also offers some particular considerations on the subject of reception (e.g., pp. 1–2, 6–9, 11–22, 39–42, 235–48, 339–45). As for *Helen* in particular, especially important for the study of the play's reception also is the recent edition by Allan (2008), which offers an excellent account of this issue (pp. 72–82).

65 Rodrigues (2012) 32–3.

Finally, some of the commented editions are of excellent quality, making them an essential tool for a good understanding of the questions raised by this play, as well as providing information about the text's transmission and the adaptations that it underwent in various forms. These include editions by Dale (1967) and Kannicht (1969).

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PART 2

Cursed Royal Families:
The Mycenaean and Theban Cycle



Electra

Cecelia E. Luschnig

Electra has a special place among Euripides' tragedies as his only extant play that follows the same basic plot as surviving plays by both Aeschylus and Sophocles: the revenge taken by Orestes and Electra on their father's killers. The three plays, Libation Bearers, the second play in Aeschylus' Oresteia, and the Electras of Sophocles and Euripides, differ in their treatment of the myth, the characters, the settings, and the meaning of the matricide. In Euripides' Electra, the setting is a rural cottage, where Electra lives with the poor farmer she has been forced to marry. She remains a virgin and spends her time mourning, waiting, and longing for revenge. Orestes arrives incognito. Together they plan and carry out the murders of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra and immediately regret killing their mother.¹

*The displacement of the setting and the conversion of the royal and heroic into the mundane, whether of objects or of persons, is at the heart of Euripides' version. The change in setting, the constant reference to the everyday world of agricultural and domestic work and childbearing make us rethink this heroic story. When performed by characters from real life (a housewifely Electra, an uncertain Orestes) upon less villainous victims (a welcoming, cordial Aegisthus and a Clytemnestra who is concerned with her daughter's well-being and repentant of her past deeds), it loses its glamour, but in the suffering, loss, and separation of the characters and in their own recognition of their wrongdoing and failure, it remains tragic. The solution by the *dei ex machina* with their criticism of Apollo only adds another jarring note to the feeling of alienation and the realization that these obsessed characters do not belong in the world of ordinary mortals where they briefly find themselves and, perhaps, also, that this is not a story to be used as a guide for proper behavior as it was by Homer in the Odyssey. Desperate remorse, a rustic setting, emphasis on everyday life stifled by an inescapable tradition—any or all of these can be indications of Euripidean influence.*

1 See the Appendix to this chapter for disambiguation of the many Electras: below, pp. 232–4.

In Literature²

Electra is one of the plays that survives only in the alphabetic collection of Euripides, indicating that it was not popular in antiquity and was not chosen as part of the canon of plays to be read in school. It was, however, subject to ridicule by Aristophanes (446–386 BC) in the *Frogs* (405 BC) a comedy about tragedy and its practitioners.³ It is in *Frogs* that Euripides, as a character in the play, boasts of having put *oikeia pragmata* (“domestic matters,” “everyday affairs,” *Frogs* 959) on the tragic stage, something for which *Electra* is much criticized (and admired, if imitation is the sincerest form of praise).⁴

In Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* (produced between 414 and 412 BC) *Electra* is mentioned several times: as the daughter left at home (l. 562), the one who told the story of the Golden Lamb (prominent in *Electra*, 698–746) to Orestes, which was woven into a fabric by Iphigenia (ll. 811–7): we remember that *Electra* was too young to weave (*Electra* 541–4). Orestes tells Iphigenia that *Electra* “is married to my friend here and has a happy life” (ll. 912–5). All references are consistent with her portrayal in *Electra*. Euripides’ *Orestes* (408 BC) takes up the story of his *Electra* as if it had ended before the announcement of the siblings’ exile and their separate departures.⁵

In Roman literature, Livius Andronicus (3rd-century BC epic poet, playwright/adaptor) produced a tragedy *Aegisthus*, now lost but for a few brief fragments, in which *Electra* is mentioned; nothing, however, connects her to Euripides’ or any other extant version. The tragedy covers Agamemnon’s assassination and its aftermath. In *fr.* 12–3⁶ *Aegisthus*, relying on his new royal status, orders *Electra* to be taken forcibly from the temple. What happens next to *Electra* is not known, but we can surmise, even from these brief mentions, that she is her defiant self. Pacuvius, another Roman playwright (2nd century BC), is author of the tragedy *Doulorestes* (“Orestes the Slave”), of which few fragments survive. Several (*fr.* 119, 120–1, 125–30) refer to Clytemnestra’s having betrothed *Electra* to Oeax (brother of Palamedes, who blames Orestes for his

2 Which came first, Sophocles’ or Euripides’ *Electra*? Neither can be dated by external evidence. Metrical evidence is inconclusive: Sophocles’ *Electra* is placed between 420 and 410 BC; Euripides’ between 422 and 413 (earlier dates based on the metrical evidence, later ones on perceived references to contemporary events). Whichever was earlier, Sophocles’ *Electra* (with all its adaptations) has not been included among the receptions of Euripides’ *Electra*.

3 *Frogs* 1309–22 are a parody of Euripidean lyric and 1317–8 are a direct quotation of *Electra* 435–7.

4 For more details on the *oikeia pragmata*, see the Appendix, below, pp. 232–4.

5 See *Orestes* in this volume (pp. 238–58) for a fuller treatment of *Electra* in that play.

6 Fragments of the early Latin playwrights are as numbered in Warmington (1936).

brother's death: Euripides, *Orestes* 432–3), perhaps a parallel to the forced marriage of Electra in Euripides' version. Orestes and Aegisthus' meeting (*fr.* 134–5) echoes Euripides' *Electra* (ll. 776, 834–5). Finally, Orestes doubts himself as he does in Euripides: "I wish I could be more like my mother / in nature, so I could avenge my father" (*fr.* 136; cf. *Electra* 969–70). Accius, a Roman tragedian (2nd to 1st centuries BC) wrote *Agamemnonidae* ("Agamemnon's Children"), fragments of which give no clear indication of plot or character, and *Clytemnestra*, in which an argument between Clytemnestra and Electra (*fr.* 245) may reflect either Euripides or Sophocles. The Roman philosopher and playwright Seneca (4 BC–65 AD) adds the character Electra to his *Agamemnon* (ca. 55 AD), though she does not appear in the Greek original. The argument between mother and daughter (ll. 953–70) is bitter on Electra's side, but Euripides' Clytemnestra is more conciliatory than Seneca's. It was she in Euripides (*Electra* 27–8) who prevented Aegisthus from killing her daughter, while in Seneca she encouraged her lover to chop off her daughter's head (ll. 986–7), but was apparently not able to bring herself to commit filicide (cf. Euripides, *Electra* 29–30). Still Seneca's Clytemnestra is the most complex of the characters in his *Agamemnon* (as she is in Aeschylus): she has doubts about killing Agamemnon (ll. 260–7) and admits her own guilt (e.g., l. 284) as in Euripides' *Electra* (1105–6; 1109–10).

In the modern period,⁷ Voltaire (1694–1778), intellectual of the French Enlightenment, philosopher, historian, and poet penned an *Oreste* (1750), more classical than the Greeks.⁸ Although the tragedy has most in common with Sophocles' *Electra*—the memorial celebration of Agamemnon's murder, the ill treatment of Electra within the palace grounds, Orestes carrying the urn of ashes—Voltaire's Clytemnestra is not the vicious harridan of Sophocles. She tries to be conciliatory (pp. 78–9);⁹ she feels guilt and fear (p. 79); when Aegisthus plans to kill Orestes she objects. And when Orestes is recognized and is about to be put to death, she determines to save him (pp. 135–6). Orestes and Electra are reconciled to their mother. Behind the scenes Orestes kills his mother *by accident* as she tries to save Aegisthus (pp. 143–5). Now Orestes must wander "an exile from the world" accompanied by faithful Pylades. The ending,

7 "Sophocles' and in particular Aeschylus' portrayal of Electra dominated her reception in the 18th and 19th centuries. Euripides' *Electra* was largely neglected," Bakogianni (2011) 197.

8 Perhaps we should say "more sanitized." The darker aspects of the revenge of Electra and Orestes were mostly concealed until the 20th century: see Bakogianni (2011) 8–9.

9 In his dedication, Voltaire writes of his reformed Clytemnestra, "The seeds of this character were in Sophocles and Euripides, and I have only unfolded them," Fleming (1988) 66. The cited page numbers are from this edition/translation.

then, is closer to those of Aeschylus (in *Libation Bearers*) and Euripides (in *Electra* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*) than to Sophocles.

As for the 19th and early 20th centuries, notice should be taken of Benito Pérez Galdós (1845–1920), a major Spanish novelist and playwright. His play *Electra* (1901), set in contemporary Madrid, revolves around the character of Electra, an eighteen year old orphan, and her family relationships. The play caused a stir for its supposed liberal and anti-clerical views, including riots and bloodshed.¹⁰ Maurice Baring (1874–1945) an English poet, playwright, and satirist, offers *After Euripides' Electra* (1911), a parody both of symposium literature without the lofty speeches and of middle-brow society of the early 20th century. This is a humorous dialogue in which a gathering of rather fey characters, both men and women (uncharacteristically for the 5th-century setting), discuss Euripides' *Electra* which they have just seen at the Theatre of Dionysus. Their opinions range from "too long," "wonderful," "marvelous," "better than Sophocles' *Electra*," to "very clever; but it's not a play" (pp. 160–2).¹¹ They discuss music, acting, costumes, the play and characters. Hegeso, one of the women, says of Electra, perceptively capturing the loss the princess has suffered (p. 163):

Yes, and she was so sad, so miserable; she couldn't bear doing it. She *loved* her mother, although her mother had been so unkind, and turned her out of that beautiful house into a cold cruel hut, and only a herdsman to talk to. Don't you agree with me . . . that Electra was cruelly treated? She couldn't help it, could she?

While the company waits for Euripides, the criticism is generally favorable with nearly everyone finally admitting to being moved by the performance. Then a messenger arrives to say that Euripides begs off, after which the claws come out and various characters chime in, in a chorus of disapprobation: "I never liked Euripides." "The man's an atheist." "People like Socrates and Euripides ought to be put in prison" (p. 170).

The beautiful poetic drama *The Tower Beyond Tragedy*,¹² a modern version of the *Oresteia* (but very un-Aeschylean) was composed in 1924¹³ by Robinson Jeffers (1887–1962), American poet and playwright. In Act 2, the complex

10 For its connection to the Electra myth, see Kidd (1999) 130–45.

11 The quotations are from Baring (1911).

12 Page numbers are from Jeffers (1925). Accessed here: <http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/robinson-jeffers/the-tower-beyond-tragedy/>.

13 It was staged in New York in 1950 and recorded for Smithsonian Folkways in 1964.

Clytemnestra tries to reconcile with her daughter: “Electra, / Make peace with me” (p. 65) and her son. Orestes hesitates, then pushed to it by Electra, kills her, regrets, and leaves in exile (pp. 69–71). In Act 3 Orestes relives the murder of his mother, rebuffs his sister’s advances and leaves to go beyond tragedy, elsewhere, to death: “It would have been better / To have parted kindlier, for it is likely / We shall have no future meeting” (p. 80).

Richard Aldington (1892–1943), a British imagist poet and biographer, was best known for his World War I poetry. In a short poem called *Troy’s Down*¹⁴ (1930), the speaker, Electra, has grown old with her memories, hatreds, and regrets. What does she regret most? She remembers her mother’s beauty. “No man” she laments “has shed blood for my sake” (l. 16). The comparison between her life and her mother’s, as in the Euripidean *Electra*, is what rankles the most, in this melancholy remembrance of her life:

Kings shed blood for her sake—
and I, the virtuous, the serf’s bride,
an old woman trembling in chilly sunlight,
a king’s daughter,
but not the lover or mother of kings. . . . (ll. 8–12)

In Euripides, she was married off to (not a serf, but) a poor farmer with a small holding and, therefore, kept from being lover or mother of kings. As in Euripides, she participated in the matricide:

I armed my brother’s hand
but shrank and trembled and wept
when the sword pierced her womb,
the woman men loved (ll. 17–20).

Though it is often said of Euripides’ *Electra* that she is more concerned with herself than with her father’s death, Aldington captures here what was denied to the princess, not just her great expectations, but the possibility of loving and being loved.

It was I who killed her . . .
But who has loved me,
what man shed blood for my sake? (ll. 20, 23–4)

14 Quotations are from Jones (1972) 107–8. Also available online through Google Books, Richard Aldington “Troy’s Down.”

Electra continues to fail at the myth of herself.

H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) (1886–1961), an American imagist poet, wrote a series of poems on the Electra legend called *From Electra-Orestes* as part of *A Dead Priestess Speaks* (1932, 1934).¹⁵ The poems express the ambiguous love-hate relationship that we see in the feelings of Euripides' Electra for her mother and her obsession with her mother's elegance (*Electra* 966, 1005–6, 1069–71, 1086–90, and especially 1230, "Mother, loved, and unloved;" cf. H. D. "hating and longing still," p. 379). To Electra, Clytemnestra is like a flower, a rhododendron (p. 378). In love with her mother's beauty, Electra regrets not knowing her (pp. 381–2):

no one knows the colour of a flower
till it is broken
no one knows the inner-inner petal of a rose till the purple
is torn open
no one knew
Clytemnestra:
but
—too late,
too late,
too late,
Electra.

Orestes, too, regrets: "when I struck Clytemnestra, I struck myself" (p. 384). And at the end of it all there is doubt. In Euripides' play, before the deed the doubt belonged to Orestes. Electra never doubted the oracle, until—too late (Euripides, *Electra* 1303–4):

ORESTES: Did an avenging demon speak in the guise of the god?
ELECTRA: Sitting on Apollo's sacred tripod? I don't think so.
ORESTES: I cannot believe that was a true prophecy
(Euripides, *Electra* 979–81);

cf. these lines with *From Electra-Orestes* (p. 387):

ORESTES: It was you who said, slay.
ELECTRA: Long ago—yesterday.

¹⁵ *From Electra-Orestes* 1, 2, 3 was originally published in *Pagany* 3 (1932) 81–4; *From Electra-Orestes* 4, 5, 6 and *Final Chorus* were first published in *Poetry* 45 (1934) 135–9. The quotations are from the collection of Martz (1983) 378–88.

ORESTES: But now—the shadows have not moved.

ELECTRA: There are no shadows where the whole is black.

ORESTES: Would you take back the deed, take back the sword?

ELECTRA: Only the word.

ORESTES: The word was God.

ELECTRA: Who is to say whether the word was daemon, God or devil?

Electra's deeper want (as in Euripides), her need to keep the myth alive, is realized, at the cost of life as the chorus sings of the "high-dead," those figures of myth, those life deniers, intoning that they will live on "like star-names in the sky, like the names of the isles of the sea" (p. 282).

Robert Turney (1900–1972), American actor and playwright, was author of *Daughters of Atreus* which opened in New York in October 1936 and ran for two weeks.¹⁶ The play is in three acts with each act based on a different play in the Atreus saga: Act 1 follows the plot of *Iphigenia at Aulis*; Act 2 covers the material of *Agamemnon*; Act 3 dispatches that of the Electra plays with a little of *Orestes*. There are many added characters, including an international cast of ambassadors, which is one of its modernist aspects, favoring diplomacy over war. Aegisthus and Achilles are pacifists: "No war is holy and no war is just," asserts Achilles (pp. 30–1). Orestes returns in Act 3 with Pylades. They learn just now that Agamemnon is dead and that Electra lives like a slave. As in Euripides she goes to the stream to fetch water (p. 80). The women of the court invite her to join the spring festival, but again, like her Euripidean counterpart, she demurs, saying: "I have no place among the customary revels of my town" (p. 82; cf. Euripides, *Electra* 175–85). Instead she calls for vengeance and is seen and recognized by Orestes (p. 83). They begin at once to plan the murders. Pylades advises in the strongest terms against the murder of Clytemnestra (pp. 88–9). Orestes with the urging of Electra will not be turned aside (p. 89). It is gratifying that Pylades, who in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (900–2) speaks with the voice of Apollo to defend the oracle and spur on the hesitant Orestes, is the one to say of the oracle that commanded Orestes to slay those who killed his father: "It was obscurely worded, easy to mistake" (p. 88; cf. *Electra* 979–81). The second scene of Act 3 moves inexorably to matricide. Clytemnestra, lamenting the emptiness of her life, accepts her death at Orestes' hands (p. 102). As in Euripides, she tries to be reconciled to Electra, but her daughter responds with deadly sarcasm: "Tonight I'll purge myself of hate," because tonight her mother will be dead. Orestes enters with Aegisthus' blood on his sword, after striking down his enemy, as in Euripides, at the festival. When Clytemnestra pleads

16 See <http://www.playbillvault.com/Show/Detail/11445/Daughters-of-Atreus>. Quotations are from Turney (1936).

with the children not to ruin their lives by killing her, Orestes hesitates but is urged on by Electra. After the murder Electra and Orestes enter as two broken, tortured figures, going over the death scene, reliving it as they do in Euripides (pp. 123–4: cf. Euripides, *Electra* 1206–9, 1214–7, 1221–5). Electra blames herself (cf. Euripides, *Electra* 1182, 1224–5). At the last Orestes sees Electra as one of his tormentors who now begin to surround him and the play shifts to the mad scene in *Orestes* (pp. 124–5). Surrounding the tragic action is a frame of palace women around Clytemnestra's elderly, dying nurse, a woman who has given up hate and replaced it with equanimity, offering a contrast to the characters who are obsessed with living up to the myth in which they are imprisoned.¹⁷

The *Électre*¹⁸ of Hippolyte Jean Giraudoux (1882–1944), a well-known public intellectual of his day, novelist, essayist, playwright, and government official, was first produced in Paris in 1937. It takes place in front of the palace at Argos and the time is nonspecific. It is a new play rather than an adaptation, with new characters, a new plot, new themes, though it refers more closely to Euripides' *Electra* than to other ancient versions. The traditional characters, Orestes, Electra, Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, a Messenger, and various extras, are enhanced by a Beggar, a Judge, his scandalous wife, and Electra's prospective husband a Gardener (in the role of the Farmer/husband in Euripides) all of whom add to the urbanity for which Giraudoux was famous and supply the clever dialogue and modern themes which plant the play in 20th-century Europe. *Électre* opens at dawn with the arrival of Orestes, accompanied by three little girls who met him at the city gates. They are the Eumenides. Scene by scene they age and are replaced by noticeably more grown-up actors, so that by the end of the play they are the same age as Electra. They take on her appearance as they set off to hound Orestes until, they predict, he will go mad and kill himself, cursing his sister as he dies. Not only do they mature in one day like insects, the likeness of these irritating Eumenides to buzzing flies is already commented on early in the first Act (p. 161). It is the day that Aegisthus has arranged to marry Electra off to the Gardener in order to keep her from "becoming herself" and ruining everyone's life. The Gardener, even more than Euripides' Farmer, introduces the nature motif which runs through the first half of the play. Like Euripides' Farmer he has put Electra on a pedestal and, feeling himself unworthy, does not plan to touch her: he will sleep in the shed, where he can protect her from owls or other intruders (p. 184). Their marriage is called off by Clytemnestra, and after the first Act, the play continues without

17 See Luschnig (1995) 155–6.

18 A longer version of this section appears in Roisman/Luschnig (2011) 259–63. Quotations are from the translation of Phyllis La Farge, Giraudoux (1964).

him. Like Euripides' Farmer, who leaves to fetch Agamemnon's old attendant and does not return, he does not participate in the tragic events of the second half of the drama. Midway through Act 1 Orestes has the boldness to displace the Gardener and propose to Electra.¹⁹ Shortly thereafter he identifies himself to Electra, in a scene reminiscent of Euripides (*Electra* 222–4). Orestes is able to be created anew and taught to accept his name and the actions it requires. In Giraudoux' play, the story is not yet written. It too must become itself: the alleged accidental death of Agamemnon becomes or is revealed to be a murder that must be avenged. Electra learns (or invents) the story she is in and teaches it to her brother. Orestes becomes himself, the self of his myth, but it is not a self he can continue to live with. Giraudoux here seems to capture the essence of Euripides' play, despite the many changes.

There are other parallels with the Euripidean version. The emphasis on quotidian details makes us shudder at the incongruity of mythical and murderous behavior in the midst of everyday activities:

THIRD OF THE EUMENIDES [*talking about the day Orestes will commit matricide*]:

Just try spreading butter on your bread that day with a knife, even if it's not the knife that killed your mother, and you'll see (p. 210).

This reflects the genius of Euripides, notorious for dragging *oikeia pragmata* ("everyday items") into "heroic" situations.

Agamemnon's death cries are retold very shortly before the killing of Clytemnestra, who is killed randomly, almost by accident, and before Aegisthus (pp. 243, 245). As in Euripides, Orestes does not look at his mother as he kills her; but in Giraudoux he does not even know whom he is striking: "BEGGAR: ... He had closed his eyes and dealt the couple a blow at random. Even an unworthy mother is sensitive and mortal" (p. 245). There is also a divine or supernatural presence, suggested by the ominous bird Aegisthus sees circling above him for much of the play, in the three little insect-like Eumenides, and in the person of the Beggar who speaks in parables and makes other vatic utterances. Like Castor, the Beggar takes up most of the end of the play. First he

19 Incest comes up in several of the 20th century versions: for example, Pérez Galdós: see Kidd (1999) 136, 143–5; Jeffers ("You were in my vision to-night in the / forest, Electra, I thought I embraced you / More than brotherwise ... possessed, you call it ... entered / the fountain," p. 74; also 78–9), and in the movie *Elektra* (2010) by the Indian director Shyamaprasad, in which Electra "is madly in love with her father." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektra_%282010_film%29. About this movie, see, also, below, pp. 230–1.

tells the story of Agamemnon's death (pp. 241–4). Then he narrates the deaths of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus while they are happening, even getting ahead of events: "BEGGAR [*as Aegisthus' death cry is heard*]: I went too fast. He's just catching up with me" (p. 246).

The ambiguity of this story of marriage, murder, war, and revenge, not just the defining act of matricide, is never forgotten in Giraudoux' *Électre*. Aegisthus is not a brute. Though dictatorial, he is given to reflection on metaphysical questions in Act 1 and, in Act 2, in the face of political upheaval and national crisis, becomes a majestic, almost heroic, figure. His change of heart does not matter to Electra once she has found the Truth. It is only in Act 2 that Electra realizes that her father was murdered. The crime has not festered for years in Electra's mind because the story that Agamemnon died by accident had been accepted. By informing Orestes of the new Truth, she determines that he take up his identity and his destiny (pp. 210–1). Electra is an idealist, believing there is a Truth, a Justice, apart from human beings and their activities, apart even from regret and repentance. The ruin of the world, the downfall of the city, the deaths of thousands, even the loss of Orestes are all worth the sacrifice to her if the ideal is achieved, the Truth discovered, the criminals brought to Justice: "ELECTRA: I have Orestes. I have Justice. I have everything" (p. 247). The third of the Eumenides tells her she will never see Orestes again, that with her sisters she will hound him to death. "ELECTRA: I have Justice. I have everything" (p. 247).

Not long after Giraudoux, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), French philosopher and playwright, recreated Orestes as an existentialist hero in *Les Mouches* ("The Flies", 1943), which follows the *Oresteia*, but Electra's remorse places her in Euripides' camp. Virgilio Piñera (1912–1979), Cuban writer and intellectual, set his drama, *Electra Garrigó* (1948), in contemporary Havana at the Garrigó home, a colonial mansion, represented abstractly by six columns:

The illustrious patriarch Agamemnon turns into a slovenly, corrupt dictator, the chorus becomes a group of *guajiros* (peasants) who sing to the tune of "Guantanamera," and black servants take the place of the silent slaves of the original. European high art is removed from its pedestal and placed side by side with local traditions in a humorously critical performance of Cuba's own, distinctly heterodox modernity.²⁰

20 Taylor/Townsend (2008) 16–7; citations are from this collection.

The family is alive together at the opening, the Garrigós: Agamemnon, his wife Clytemnestra Pla, their children Electra (the smart one) and Orestes (rather dull-witted), the wife's lover, Aegisthus Don (who dresses in a white suit, we are told, like a Cuban pimp), and a tutor, a centaur (like Chiron, tutor of Achilles, Jason, and other heroes). Through what is often extremely witty dialogue we follow their sometimes-surprising relationships, their arguments over the children: Agamemnon wants Orestes to leave and Electra to stay; Clytemnestra wants Electra to leave and Orestes to stay. Electra's intended husband kills himself. We hear of Clytemnestra's "prophetic breasts" (p. 186) and Agamemnon's epic dimension (or pretensions, p. 187). With Electra's collusion, Clytemnestra has the old rooster killed and Agamemnon ends up dead (pp. 187–9). Electra goads Orestes into killing their mother by poisoning a papaya, her favorite fruit. Aegisthus just walks out of the house and their lives (p. 194). Clytemnestra dies (p. 195). Orestes is free to leave. Electra never leaves. The place becomes an "infinite multiplication of Electras" (p. 193): everything becomes Electra. There are no Furies, no remorse, nothing but the emptiness of being Electra.

The House of Atreus: Three Dramas in One Act (1952) by Burton Crane (American financial writer, foreign correspondent, playwright, and singer, 1901–1963) adapts and abridges Euripides' *Hecuba*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, and Sophocles' *Electra* into one play. Even though the script of the third part is based on Sophocles, its ending is more Euripidean in its despair. The last lines, sung by the Chorus are (p. 87):

Are they delivered from their suffering?
 Have they gained freedom from the hand of fate?
 The answer from the heavens is a No. O woe! O unimaginable woe!²¹

Sylvia Plath (1932–1963), American poet, is best known for her confessional poetry and tragic death. Her poem *Electra on Azalea Path*²² (1959) could be a reflection of any Electra or all of them. Perhaps her grief is too pure for her to be Euripidean and yet words about the land and its produce and her connection to everyday things ("The day you died I went into the dirt . . ." l. 1) are reminiscent of Euripides' *Electra*. The fourth stanza makes plain, however, that Plath has the *Oresteia* in mind: "The flat sea purpled like that evil cloth / My mother unrolled at your last homecoming" (ll. 31–2; cf. *Agamemnon* 906–57). But this may not preclude the others. The next line shows the poet seeing herself

21 Crane (1952) 87.

22 Accessed online: <http://www.angelfire.com/tn/plath/electra.html>.

acting in a Greek tragedy like Euripides' *Electra* who sees herself performing a role: "I borrow the stilts of an old tragedy" (l. 33; cf. *Electra* 54–9). She sees herself wearing the high shoes (of a later period) of tragic actors, making her progress through life precarious. More than that, in seeing her every action as enactment of a script and herself as the tragic protagonist, Plath's reception of *Electra* becomes her own life story or her own mythical version of it,²³ "The stony actors poise and pause for breath" (l. 37). In the poem *Daddy* (1962) she throws off those oppressive shoes, if only in verse, not long before her own death.

Yannis Ritsos (1909–1990) was one of the major Greek poets of the 20th century and a political activist. In his *Orestes* (1962–1966), Orestes and Pylades, two unnamed young men, arrive at the Lion Gate of Agamemnon's citadel. They listen at the stone stairway to the palace as the tour busses are leaving. The centuries are collapsed as they are in Greece, in places like Mycenae.²⁴ A woman's voice is heard endlessly keening. Here is an Orestes who loves life, who is alive to the world in all its variety, wonder and splendor, even the slugs on park benches are part of it. But blood calls, blood waits (p. 197):

Now let's lift this urn that's supposed to keep my ashes;—
the recognition scene is about to begin.
Everyone will find in me the one they've been expecting,
they'll find the just man, according to their laws,
and only you and I will know
I really carry my true ashes in this urn;—only the two of us.²⁵

If your name is Orestes, you cannot escape the house of Atreus. Even the anonymous youth of Ritsos' *Orestes*, not yet recognized, knows that, "Let me kiss your smile for the last time, / as long as I still have lips. Let's go now. I recognize my fate. Let's go" (p. 197). The urn may be the prop from Sophocles' *Electra*, but this Orestes is not Sophoclean. The victory of Euripides' humanity is clear in a

23 As Scott (2005) 144 suggests, "Plath thus allows *Electra* to voice her own interpretation of the events, and the mythological heroine is introduced as a double for Plath's primary poetic persona"; see also Bakogianni (2009) 194–217.

24 When my family and I were last in Mycenae we visited the local graveyard; among the tombstones was one of an Agamemnon, mayor of the town, who had been murdered during the Nazi Occupation, another bore the name of Orestes. No wonder the past is so much alive in the landscape, the songs, the people.

25 The quotations are from the translation of Philip Pastras and George Pilitsis in Ritsos (1989) 181–99.

reluctant Orestes, who at least admires his mother and may even love her, and in the triumph of the ordinary (p. 197):

Look, it's dawning. There, the first rooster's crowing on the fence.
The gardener's up: a small tree takes root in the garden. Familiar noises
of tools—saws, hoes—
and the running water in the yard; someone is washing himself; the
ground smells;
the water is boiling in the coffeepots; quiet columns of smoke over the
rooftops;
a warm aroma of sage. We survived this night, too.

Opposite the title page of the poem is a xerographic rendering of a painted rock portrait of Orestes by Yannis Ritsos (p. 180). On one side the face is bright though a tear is falling from the left eye, the other is fading into oblivion, or into myth.

Henry Treece (1911–1966), a prolific British academic, poet, and writer of children's fiction, also wrote a trilogy of adult historical novels set in Greece in the Mycenaean Age: *Jason*, *Electra*, and *Oedipus*. In *Electra* (or *Amber Princess*, 1963) Electra, now an old woman, attempts to explain to her Hittite doctor both herself and the Hellenic way of being. This novel is based in part on Euripides' *Electra* with much added material, many added characters, incidents and sexual encounters, as well as everyday household things that suit the expansiveness of a (historical) novel. Throughout most of the novel Electra and Clytemnestra love each other and there are even times when Electra gets along with Aegisthus. Much of the conflict revolves around the facts that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are devotees of the old matriarchal religion and that Aegisthus is a proponent of greater equality among the people: he reorganizes the army as a citizen militia. Orestes has disappeared with his "tutor" and returns around age seven as a throwback, a warrior who thinks he is the new Agamemnon. Aegisthus kills Agamemnon. After her escape, many adventures, a failed marriage to Pylades, and more wanderings, Electra returns to Mycenae. In the chaos of the Dorian invasion, the return of the avaricious Menelaus with an army of Egyptians, and Orestes and Pylades with a small contingent of Iron Men, Orestes manages to kill Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, and their infant daughter (whom Electra tried to save). Through the intervention of Menelaus, Agamemnon's children are arrested as matricides but escape.²⁶ Reunited, Electra and Pylades live like two peasants; have sons; grow old and

26 See also chapter on *Orestes*, below, esp. p. 242.

infirm among their memories and ghosts. Pylades dies. At the end the novel returns obliquely to the known story, touching on the tyranny of myth, a theme of Euripides' *Electra*, and at the same time sheds doubt on everything the old woman (Electra) has said. The Hittite doctor is speaking to his apprentice (p. 280):

'Who is she?' you ask. She may have been a temple dancer in her youth. But I would guess that she is one of the sort who dwell too much in the past, and dream that they were princesses, or priestesses, or maenads. The bloody tales they heard at their nurses' knee will never let them go, and in the end they become the creatures of their own dreams. These valleys and villages are full of them still and they can never let the past die in peace. The old ghosts are always with these strange people.²⁷

Gladys Schmitt (1909–1972) was an American academic, editor, and writer of novels, including the best-seller *David the King*. In the historical novel, *Electra* (1965), Part 1 is primarily concerned with the love affair between Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, which, as two hundred pages pass without a murder, makes them somewhat sympathetic. Orestes has run away and is feared dead and Electra is looking for him at dusk just as the sounds of feasting begin to rise from the palace below. Any talk of feasting brings up the feast of Thyestes, which—it turns out—obsesses Aegisthus. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and, later, Agamemnon try to marry Electra off, first to a shy young man at court and then to Eurymedon, Agamemnon's ambitious charioteer, chosen successor in the belief that Orestes is dead. In Part 2, Clytemnestra has had a change of heart and balks at killing her husband, but Aegisthus and his henchman strike down Agamemnon, Cassandra with her infants, and Eurymedon at a banquet. As in Homer (*Odyssey*, e.g., 4.534–7) and Sophocles (*Electra* 203) they are "slain like beasts with their muzzles in a manger . . ." (pp. 215–6).²⁸ After the murder Aegisthus becomes impotent and Clytemnestra irritable. Electra blames herself for the deaths. She escapes from the palace and lives in hiding in filth with her hair cropped, pretending to be a boy. Orestes and Pylades return and the siblings recognize each other. No tokens are needed because they were inseparable until Orestes ran off with his "tutor." Electra has a choice, to give up the obsession for revenge, and return with Orestes to Pylades' home, but she has seen too much. The novel ends with Orestes looking forward to a time they can say goodbye to Mycenae, its memories and ghosts. A ray of hope is offered:

²⁷ Treece (1963).

²⁸ Schmitt (1965).

Electra takes comfort in Pylades. The novel ends without a matricide. What makes the work marginally Euripidean are the hesitancy and second thoughts on the parts of Orestes and Clytemnestra, the details about domestic life and especially dining (given added poignancy because in Euripides' *Electra*, Aegisthus is killed at his own feast), Electra's obsession with herself, and pity for the vulnerability of the flesh displayed throughout.

Rajiva Wijesinha (1954–), a Sri Lankan writer, scholar, diplomat, and statesman, wrote the play *Electra* in 1971 while he was a student, but it was not aired (by Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation) until 1985; it was published in book form in 1986. The play's sources are Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Electra*, Euripides' *Electra*, and Sartre's *The Flies*.²⁹ This witty drama opens with the return of Orestes with Pylades to the palace of Atreus at Mycenae. The "tutor" reads a poem written by Electra urging Orestes to take revenge on his father's murderers. Neither Orestes nor Pylades wants any part in killing. To avoid being caught in Electra's obsessions, in an original twist on the false report to the rulers of Orestes' demise, Pylades suggests telling Electra that Orestes is dead. Electra enters singing (as in Euripides) "Walk weeping as you go" (p. 3; cf. Euripides, *Electra* 112–3, 127–8). Electra is so obsessed with following the tradition that Orestes be the avenger that she resents Chrysothemis' suggestion that they do the deed themselves, or that Chrysothemis' lover (a common soldier) undertake it.³⁰ A messenger comes announcing that Orestes is dead. He is believed by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra with relief, and, reluctantly, by Electra. Of course, Orestes is not dead. Act 2 is an existentialist farce, not so much of mistaken identity as of lack of fixed identity. Clytemnestra describes her motive in killing her husband as a desire to do the exemplary gesture (p. 25):

I had to do something. And when Agamemnon killed Iphigenia I knew what there was for me to do. It wasn't because I didn't love Agamemnon any more—I had never loved him: it wasn't to avenge Iphigenia, even though I pretended, even to myself, that it was. It was really an attempt to be grand.

But her role is not fixed: different actors take on the role of Clytemnestra. She claims that Electra is not her daughter but was adopted as a substitute for the real Electra. The soldier, the substitute Orestes, Chrysothemis' lover, kills Clytemnestra (p. 32) and goes for Aegisthus who begs for his life and knocks the sword out of the soldier's hand. The soldier strangles him (p. 37) and

29 From the author's introduction, iv–v. The quotations are from Wijesinha (1986).

30 See Aristotle *Poetics* 1453b10 on the necessity of following the traditional stories.

poisons himself (p. 39): "The real Orestes is falsely dead, the false Orestes is really dead," laments Chrysothemis over the loss of her brave lover whom she sees as the real Orestes, because he did the deed Orestes was destined to do (pp. 40–1), a nice point, and one Euripides' *Electra*, were she still around in the 20th century, might have appreciated. Act 3 continues the metatheatrical farce of the literary inevitability of Orestes or an actor playing Orestes to fulfill his destiny. Orestes and Pylades are alone in their room; the time is the same as Act 2. Pylades is composing. He is happy because he is free, but realizes Orestes is not happy (p. 44):

PYLADES: But why aren't you happy? You're free. You can do what you like now. For eight years, for your whole life you were brought up to do what Electra wanted, what Agamemnon wanted, what Clytemnestra was preparing you for when she killed Agamemnon, what Aegisthus was preparing you for when he was born. Everything pointed to the moment when you would kill them, the climax in your family drama³¹ and you their instrument, priest and victim, led relentlessly to the purpose for which you were born. And now you haven't killed them, you've freed yourself from everything that was trying to make you into something you weren't and now you can live as you like. And now when you're free, you're not happy. Why?

ORESTES: But I am happy. I told you I was happy.

PYLADES: Then why don't you sound happy? You've changed. You're regretting what you've done.

ORESTES: No. I don't regret it. But-but I was wondering whether I should have killed them.

Electra comes to their room (p. 57) to fetch Orestes because Mycenae needs a living king, as if Chrysothemis' soldier would have been an acceptable Orestes if he had not killed himself (p. 41). Electra saved Orestes for a purpose and comes now to claim him. He refuses: "The Orestes you created had to die, for the real Orestes to live" (p. 58); "I'm not the Orestes you want" (p. 59). But Electra insists Orestes play his role, or else she will kill him and get another (pp. 62–3). He will be king (p. 65). She does not believe in his existentialist freedom. He is only a character in the drama of her life: for Clytemnestra has succeeded in creating a woman in her own image (p. 30). As the mother had said to her daughter in Act 2, "Now, dearest, I can depart in peace for it's quite

31 Cf. Clytemnestra, speaking to Aegisthus (p. 25): "Agamemnon, Iphigenia, Electra, even you, really—all of you are only characters in the wonderful drama of my life."

clear that you will continue my existence here on earth even when I am nothing" (p. 29).

James Merrill (1926–1995) was an accomplished American lyric and narrative poet, known for wordplay and wit. *Elektra: A Translation* (1972) is a thirty-six line, nine stanza poem. Based in part on Euripides' *Electra*, the poem changes scene and character in brilliant spurts and strikingly effective enjambment. Orestes arrives at the palace:³²

I thought I was
 Myself. I'm not. I am
 The sun, the sea
 Urchin. Black needles fester hot at heel.
 Sister! the ax- (ll. 12–6)

The scene shifts to Aegisthus' feast where he is sacrificed into his slaughtered beef:

Before in us the god grows old—
 The autarch sinks
 Dark red groaning table (ll. 20–2)

and then switches again to Electra's rustic home:

Palace to hovel, hone the queen to crone,
 Her larder all
 But bare. Baked crumbling meets
 The children's hands. They've stumbled. It's nightfall.
 ...
 On high till now obscured
 Slow-stabbing instruments together
 Sound their A.
 Face the first music. Sleep. (ll. 27–36).

The end is Euripidean. The matricide takes place in the dark, dirt-encrusted hovel. The weapons are hidden until they strike, as though tuning up with a clash of metal against metal. Mother must face the music. Mother must die. Brother and sister strike, she guiding the weapon. They escape into the night

32 Quotations from Merrill (1972) 58–9.

and into another play, *Orestes*, which opens with Orestes sleeping until the music of murder begins again.

Marilyn Hacker (1942–), American poet, translator, and academic, included *For Elektra* in her first collection of poems *Presentation Piece* (1974) which won the National Book Award for Poetry (also, in the same work, a poem *Elektra on Third Avenue*). *For Elektra* does not specifically refer to one of the Electras. Electra dreams of her father's death, a recurring dream and, therefore, a recurring death. He becomes his own twin and he dies again. She dreams herself, another self outside herself: in her self-abuse, she is alienated from herself, hearing "The screech of her nails on my cheek" (p. 13).³³ She waits for Orestes who is a series of brothers and no brother, in a kind of stop-action rehearsal. As in Euripides' *Electra*, she meets Orestes on the path from the stream: "I will speak to you. You are not my brother, / unmasked on the river path as I long for exile" (p. 14). In their imagined conversation, the deed of matricide is broached without enthusiasm. But the mother is turned into first one object, then another, familiar, even common, yet alien, hard, modern, and unlovable:

High above your bed,
like a lamppost with eyes, stern as a pay toilet,
she stands, waiting to be told off
and tolled out. (p. 14)

The *oikeia pragmata* do not humanize this Electra at the end, despite her preference for sex and poetry and puns.

Sally Purcell (1944–1998), a British poet and translator (of literary and scholarly works from French, Greek, and Italian), composed *Electra* for her 1977 collection *Dark of Day*.³⁴ Electra's childhood was broken one distant morning, leaving a grey land, without tree or sun, where there is no sea, where "there can be no dawn" (p. 87). "Alone before a tomb in a faceless land," she waits, "And all this eternal while Orestes avenger / is hastening down great roads to return to that tomb" (p. 87). In a world without everyday things to distract her from despair, all she can do is wait by her tomb.

Kerry Greenwood (1954–), a prolific Australian writer of historical mysteries and fiction, wrote *Electra: A Delphic Women Mystery*, in 2013, which is the third and last in the series that also includes *Medea* and *Cassandra*. After witnessing the murder of Agamemnon, Electra (in her twenties) escapes with eleven-year old Orestes, helped by Cassandra and her lovers, a healer from the

33 Quotations from Hacker (1994) 13–4.

34 Reprinted in Purcell (2002) 87.

Asclepieion at Epidaurus and a sailor from Troy; yes, a threesome that shows how liberated Trojan women are. After many adventures, in which Electra learns to ride a horse and comb her own hair, and Cassandra, trained by the Amazons, saves the group from ruthless pirates, they reach Delphi and the home of Pylades, where Electra lives unwed. Electra grows more human and less of a spoiled princess, but she still recoils from the touch of a man. Electra has a secret. Spoiler alert: Electra was abused and raped, beginning at age eleven, by Aegisthus (who also abused Orestes). Orestes, though raised as her brother, is really Electra's son. Safe in their refuge at Phocis, Orestes grows up. He hears voices (from Apollo) telling him to kill his mother and her lover. At last they return to Mycenae. The killing of Aegisthus at the bull-sacrifice is from Euripides.

'Greetings. I am Aegisthus, King of Mycenae. Do you require purging of guilt?' he asked, holding up a pitcher of spring water. To allow him to pour it on our hands would make us *xenoi*, his guests, and increase our crime. Pylades shook his head, smiling.

'No, Lord, we are clean of offense. We are travellers from Phocis and have come to join your sacrifice' (p. 314).³⁵

The ox bellows and Aegisthus offers the axe to Orestes, to avoid an evil omen. The blow was so severe that his head was almost detached. Blood gushed over the altar (pp. 314–5). Orestes is recognized by a scar, not from a fall in the courtyard, but a burn. Clytemnestra is killed in her chamber. Electra feels no remorse, explained by the fact that she was sexually abused as a child. Orestes is haunted immediately by the Furies (as in *Libation Bearers* and Euripides' *Electra* 1342–6). He is purified in the temple of Apollo, but the persecution continues, until there is a trial before the gods on Mount Olympus and Orestes is freed. He returns to rule over Mycenae. Electra chooses the ordinary life as wife of Pylades, the life full of *oikeia pragmata*, of spinning, cooking, pruning, pickling olives, buying salt, sewing and mending, for which Euripides and his *Electra* were famous. She is free of the myth and the man and woman who poisoned her life and is happy (pp. 441–2; cf. *Iphigenia in Tauris* 912, where we began our story of Electra in literature). One does not imagine Sophocles' Electra achieving a happy life. This is not a great novel, but it contributes to democratizing and humanizing the classics and spreading Electra's fame.³⁶ Tragedy was popular entertainment for the Athenians.

35 Page numbers are from Greenwood (2013).

36 This can be judged from the enthusiasm of the customers' reviews on Amazon.com: "Wonderful retelling of Greek mythology. Brings the period to life." "[A] superb

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

Most Electra pieces in the visual arts refer to Aeschylus' Electra, if they refer to tragic drama at all. Electra mourning at Agamemnon's tomb is a popular motif, but not for receptions of Euripides' *Electra*.³⁷ It is only in *Libation Bearers* that Electra is able to visit her father's tomb. Likewise in music, most of the operas and musical settings go back to Sophocles' *Electra*, both Mozart's *Idomeneo* (1791 première) and the powerful Strauss opera, *Elektra* (1909).³⁸ Even the opera *Elektra* (1992–1993) by the famous Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis is based on Sophocles, though he wrote the score for Cacoyannis' film of Euripides' *Electra*.³⁹ Sergei Taneyev's *Oresteia* (1895 première) also was adapted from Aeschylus' trilogy.

Of the ancient vase paintings representing Electra or plot elements of Electra plays, most are of the meeting of Electra and Orestes, and most of these depict their meeting at their father's tomb, a scene enacted at the opening of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*.⁴⁰ Electra is usually sitting or standing at the tomb, among the grave objects, but in the actual play she is first seen bringing libations to the tomb. Such scenes do not refer directly to the Electras of Sophocles and Euripides: in these plays Electra is removed from the grave of her father, though for each it plays a role as a symbol of her oppression by Clytemnestra and her consort or of her alienation from her home and all she once loved. None of these can be identified as directly responding to any of the tragedies,

retelling of Electra that brings freshness by the title character..." "[T]hought provoking, entertaining and worth considering..." http://www.amazon.com/Electra-Delphic-Women-Series-Book-ebook/product-reviews/BooH2iOV6O/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showView.

37 See Bakogianni (2011) 119–51.

38 See Bakogianni (2011) 73–117.

39 See below, pp. 227–9.

40 For a good selection of images see McPhee (1986) III. 2: 543–9, described in III. 1: 709–19. In some the tomb is reduced to a stele (or pillar) which could be a compositional element, for example, fig. 39, 41, and 47. In all of these Electra holds a hydria (water jug) as she does in Euripides when she returns from the well. Nothing, however, suggests the squalor in which the Euripidean Electra lives, but aesthetic concerns could explain that. In fig. 35, though the tomb is elaborate, Electra carries the hydria on her head, as in Euripides (*Electra* 140–1). See, however, Taplin (2007) 146, "There are . . . no plausible cases to be made, as far as I am aware, for pots related to *Suppliants*, *Elektra*, *Trojan Women*, *Phoenician Women*, or *Orestes*, even though we know that some of these remained very popular in theatre."

but the feeling of the dramas is often present. Only one shows a woman leaving a fountain house and a young man approaching her, reminiscent of the scene in which Orestes first sees Electra in Euripides' version (*Electra* 106–8), but the identification with Electra and Orestes is uncertain.⁴¹ A painting of Orestes killing Clytemnestra can be related to *Libation Bearers*.⁴² The scene is framed, showing it to be indoors, though the ground is rough. Clytemnestra sinks to the ground, she bares her breast as Orestes raises the sword and holds onto her hair. These same features could, however, relate the scene to Euripides, *Electra* 1206–9. In *Electra*, Orestes covers his eyes with his cloak (l. 1221) as he strikes, but he does not have enough hands for that in a vase-painting. An Erinys is already there in the upper right corner, ready to pursue the matricide. Most telling against relating this vase to Euripides' *Electra* is the absence of Electra.

Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), modern Italian artist (born in Greece), founded the “metaphysical” school of art. In the painting *Oreste ed Elettra* (“Orestes and Electra”, 1923, egg tempera on cardboard, at the Case Museo in Milan), the two siblings are shown reacting in horror and despair after their killing of Clytemnestra.⁴³ Orestes, dressed in a blood-red tunic, covers his face with his left arm, and holds his right hand with the palm down as if pushing away the deed; his sister, swathed in the black of everlasting mourning, stands behind him, her expression one of sadness and worry. As is typical of De Chirico the figures are sculptural and theatrical. They are framed by an arch as though confined in their inescapable tradition; the dagger is at their feet. *Il rimorso di Oreste* (“Orestes’ Remorse”, 1969), oil on canvas, shows Orestes from behind facing the huge jagged black silhouette of his remorse which fills the doorway and immobilizes him. His head is that of a mannequin and his body is pierced by sharp drafting instruments, mostly triangles and rulers: both features are typical of De Chirico's work of this period. It is an indoor scene with a door and window, but framed by two large volutes on either side, making clear the classical allusion.⁴⁴

41 McPhee (1986) III. 1: 716 (fig. 66): an early 4th-century Etruscan column-krater: Berlin Staatl. Mus. 30042.

42 Paestan neck-amphora ca. 330s, J. Paul Getty Museum 80.AE.155.1: Taplin (2007) 56–7 (fig. 5).

43 *Orestes and Electra* can be seen here: <http://www.casemuseomilano.it/en/opere.php?IDcasa=3&nS=3>.

44 The painting is in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome. It is Plate 37 in de Sanna (1998) 40. See also *Oreste solitario* (“Lonely Orestes”, 1974) Plate 57 (172) and *Orestes and Electra* (1974) Plate 60 (177). Less clear in its reference to the myth is the acknowledged masterpiece of Roberto Matta (Chilean surrealist painter, 1911–2002), *The Onyx of Electra* (1944, Oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York).

Frank Miller (of Batman fame, 1957–) and Bill Sienkiewicz (1958–) created *Elektra*, a series of comic books 1981–1990. *Elektra Assassin* (1986–1987), is a finely illustrated graphic novel in eight chapters, published by Epic Comics, a subsidiary of Marvel Entertainment. In this parody of comic book violence, sexism, and clichés,⁴⁵ Electra is a scantily clothed Ninja Assassin. Chapter 1, “Hell and Back” begins with Electra’s violent birth:

SHE IS CLYTEMNESTRA. HE IS AGGAMEMNON (sic). I THINK I MIS-
SPELLED HER NAME BUT THAT IS UNIMPORTANT. IT IS NOT HER
REAL NAME. I GAVE THEM THOSE NAMES—PICKED THEM FROM A
STORY POPPA READ ME.

Although this allusion to the ancient Greek story she heard at her father’s knee may put her into the company of Euripides’ Electra with her obsession to keep the past alive and be part of the bigger myth, after this the narrative leaves behind the story of Electra as it is known, except for madness (Sophoclean), violence (Euripidean), and love for her Poppa (Jung *via* the Electra Complex),⁴⁶ and does not return to it. Like Euripides’ heroine, Electra is controlling, “Elektra never stopped running the show. I never stopped doing exactly what she wanted me to.”⁴⁷

Music

Mikis Theodorakis (1925–) is Greece’s most famous composer of the 20th century. The soundtrack for the 1962 film *Elektra* directed by Cacoyannis⁴⁸ uses a variety of musical styles, influenced by jazz and rock as well as Greek folk music and dance elements. The “Greek sound” of Theodorakis works well with Cacoyannis’ use of rural Hellas in the film: “Cacoyannis, by choosing the Greek countryside and the Greek music of Theodorakis, has relocated Classical

45 Being unsophisticated in the genre, I owe this observation to the author of the entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektra:_Assassin. I would like to thank my friend Ariana Burns for the loan of *Elektra Assassin*. Quotations are from Miller and Sienkiewicz (1986–1987).

46 “Electra complex” is a phrase coined to balance Freud’s Oedipus complex, used of a woman with obsessive and sexual feelings for her father; the term did not catch on as successfully as its male counterpart.

47 The quotation is from Chapter 5, last page, unnumbered. *Elektra*, a movie directed by Rob Bowman (1960–), based on the Miller-Sienkiewicz comic books was also released by Twentieth Century Fox in 2004.

48 The sound track can be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGOoVdrzrA>. For the film, see below, pp. 227–9.

drama to its authentic setting,”⁴⁹ though one should note that Greek tragedy, as we have it, is primarily about life in the city-state. The rural setting of Euripides’ *Electra* is one of its striking features which Cacoyannis and Theodorakis use to good effect. Theodorakis’ third opera, *Electra* (1992), was based on Sophocles.

A chamber opera, *Pylades*, adapted from the *Electra* plays of both Euripides and Sophocles, composed by Giorgos Kouroupos with libretto by Yorgos Heimonas was performed in Athens at the Megaron Musikis in 1992. It featured Melina Mercouri in the last performance of her career, in the role of Clytemnestra.⁵⁰

In 1999–2000 Virgin Steele, an American heavy metal band, released the metal opera *House of Atreus*, Acts 1 and 2, in two volumes, which tells the story of the *Oresteia*, with some Euripides mixed in: for example, *Electra* sings in the fifth track of Act 2 (*The Voice as a Weapon*), “Keep your courage and now be a man” (cf. Euripides, *Electra* 693).⁵¹

The violence of *Electra*, her madness, self-absorption and alienation appeal to the world of rock music. In 2010 the American heavy metal band Dio cut a single *Electra*, their last before the death of Ronnie James Dio, later that year.⁵² If there is any reference to our myth, it is when the narrator addresses *Electra*: “Hey, I’ve been way beyond your universe/And I’ve come back to introduce to you/the fear of the heart. . . .”⁵³ In 2011 the Danish hip hop group Suspekt, known for their macabre and sadistic lyrics, released the album *Elektra*.⁵⁴ The relationship to *Electra* is slight, seen only in the mask she wears and the illness she suffers from past trauma, all of which is filtered through the Jungian “*Electra Complex*” and the sexual violence of “horrocore” (a name coined from the horror-theme of its lyrical style) hip hop.⁵⁵ Marina and the Diamonds⁵⁶ (stage name of Marina Diamandis), a Welsh indie-pop/new-wave, singer-songwriter, released the concept album *Electra Heart* in 2012. Is there a connection to any of the *Electra* tragedies? Nothing direct, but perhaps in the song *The State of Dreaming* the refrain “My life is a play is a play is a play” followed

49 McDonald (1983) 304–10, on cinematic techniques; see also Bakogianni (2011) 168.

50 *Pylades* (1992), accessed at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/900>.

51 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoAmUCrotWQ>.

52 It was released with the group’s *Tornado Box Set*. It is included in the posthumous compilation, *The Very Best of Dio, Vol. 2* (2012). Lyrics of Dio’s *Electra* can be found at <http://www.songlyrics.com/dio/electra-lyrics/>.

53 I suspect, however, that the song is a tribute to Elektra records: “Round and round / You’re caught inside a circle.”

54 I am grateful to my friends Kyla Hanington and Kevin Richards for translating the lyrics from Danish.

55 See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspekt>.

56 Official website: <http://www.marinaandthediamonds.com/>.

by “Yeah, I’ve been living in the state of dreaming/Living in a make-believe land,” is a literary allusion to the Electra of drama. If we had any reason to think the author had a traditional Electra in mind, rather than everywoman, feeling adolescent angst, the lines from the song *Fear and Loathing* apply aptly to Euripides’ Electra: “I live my life in bitterness/And fill my heart with emptiness.”⁵⁷

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

In 1910 the Coburn players first brought Euripides’ *Electra* to the commercial stage in America.⁵⁸ The play was absent from the American theatre from then until 1950.⁵⁹

László Gyurkó (1930–2007), Hungarian writer, journalist, and member of parliament, produced *Szerelmem, Elektra* (“Electra, My Love”) a tragedy, in 1968. Gyurkó’s play, a political use of the Electra myth, relates to the events of 1958 in Hungary (when Imre Nagy the former Prime Minister was hanged for treason for his part in the failed 1956 revolution). It ran in Budapest for five years.⁶⁰

Heiner Müller (1929–1995) was a major German dramatist, poet, director. *Hamletmachine* premiered January 30, 1979. The play takes place in an unspecified communist country after the death of Stalin. It is a series of monologues of Hamlet and Ophelia. Ophelia gives the last speech while men wrap gauze bandages around her and the wheelchair in which she is sitting: Ophelia takes on the voice of Electra at the end, though the last line is a quotation of a member of the Manson Family:

This is Electra speaking. In the heart of darkness. . . . Down with the happiness of submission. Long live hate and contempt, rebellion and death. When she walks through your bedroom carrying butcher knives, you’ll know the truth.⁶¹

57 For lyrics to the whole song cycle see <http://www.songlyrics.com/marina-the-diamonds/electra-heart/>.

58 Hartigan (1995) 20–2. For details of other performances consult the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama: <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/> which lists 173 items for Euripides, *Electra*.

59 For performances see Hartigan (1995) 61–3; Wrigley (2004).

60 For Janszó’s 1974 film on the same title based, see below, pp. 229–30.

61 Müller (1984) 51. Adler (1987) in a review of *Hamletmachine* and other events, attributes it to Lynette “Squeaky” Fromme who attempted to assassinate Gerald Ford; Scott (2005) 54 attributes the line to Susan Atkins, another member of the Manson Family.

After two world wars, in the dystopia of the nuclear age, a seemingly endless cold war, and the age of terrorism, Electra has become a mass murderer and a nihilist. There is not much room for humanity here.

Tadashi Suzuki (1939–) is a Japanese intellectual, philosopher, writer, director, playwright, theatre artist, founder of the Suzuki Company of Toga. His play *Clytemnestra* (1983)⁶² is not an adaptation: “I have actually reconstructed the story, ‘requoted’ it, as it were.”⁶³ The play requotes Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Scenes 3 and 5, especially, are based on Euripides’ *Electra*. In Scene 3 Orestes offers the body of Aegisthus to Electra. She gives a speech based on Euripides (*Electra* 907–57) but also stabs and keeps stabbing the body and cuts off his penis. In scene 5 Orestes doubts Apollo (cf. *Electra* 141–2). Scene 10 is distilled from Euripides’ *Orestes* (the trial scene) and *Electra*, as we see in the remorse and sadness of the brother and sister:

ORESTES: “I killed my own mother.”

ELECTRA: “I drew the sword.” (p. 157; cf. Euripides, *Electra* 1224–5)

And especially in the reliving of the murder scene:

ORESTES “This cannot be endured. For I took the hair of her head . . . grasped the robes above me, took my sword, and made her the object of my sacrifice. I thrust my sword deep into her throat.” (p. 158, cf. Euripides, *Electra* 1206–9 and 1221–3.)

But in the end Clytemnestra triumphs: her ghost appears and she slashes both her children (p. 158).⁶⁴ Another of Suzuki’s plays, *Waiting for Orestes: Electra*, based on the scripts of Euripides and von Hofmannsthal, set in a psychiatric hospital, opened the 2012 Edinburgh Festival.⁶⁵

In 1998 Tom Glynn, Theatre Arts faculty member, directed Euripides’ *Electra* on the campus of the University of Idaho. It was a brilliant production,

62 To see a videotape: <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/sources/60i>; for a scene performed by The Hartt School, Actor Training, in which Clytemnestra murders Agamemnon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g93R6A2xuw8>.

63 Suzuki (1986) 121, from his introduction to *Clytemnestra*. All page numbers refer to Suzuki (1986). See also *Orestes*, below, p. 248.

64 See McDonald (1992) 47: “His [Suzuki’s] eclectic selection blurs the ancient representations and the result is an Aeschylean Clytemnestra, endowed with the supernatural, vengeful power common to abused females in Noh drama; she confronts the neurotic Euripidean Orestes and, of course, she wins.”

65 <http://edinburghfestival.list.co.uk/article/44433-waiting-for-orestes-electra/>.

capturing the connection to the land, that is prominent in Euripides' version. The *dei ex machina* were played by large puppets (designed by puppet artisan Mark Spain) which gave them an other-worldly, yet serious, dimension. Glynn was influenced by Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam* and Seamus Heaney's *The Cure at Troy*. "In his usual fashion, Euripides has imbued myth with the reality of human experience, counter-posing suspense and horror with comic realism and down-to-earth comments on life."⁶⁶

The Murders at Argos, a play by the Canadian actor, writer and director David Foley (1961–), was first performed at the New York Fringe, in 2000.⁶⁷ This is an adaptation of Euripides' *Orestes* more than *Electra*, but it includes some scenes reminiscent of *Electra*: Aegisthus is drunk at Agamemnon's tomb (p. 32; in fact Aegisthus is always drunk); Orestes shows reluctance (pp. 41–2) and even tries to escape; Aegisthus tries to befriend Orestes (p. 43) but Orestes plunges a sword into him as he is apologizing (44).⁶⁸

Luis Alfaro (1963–), a Chicano performance artist and playwright, winner of a MacArthur "genius" prize, wrote his play *Electricidad* (2003) in English with some choice Spanish phrases. It is subtitled "A Chicano Take on the Tragedy of Electra" and is one of the most original and enjoyable of the receptions of the figure of Electra. It may intend to be a "take" on Sophocles' *Electra*, but the character of Orestes is more Euripidean. *Electricidad* (the Electra figure) keeps the body of her father in the yard "as if he was a car" (p. 10) or a "Rose parade float" (p. 21).⁶⁹ The Clytemnestra character, *Electricidad*'s mother Clemencia (who has no lover), killed Agamemnon (El Auggie) the king of the barrio, because she wants to change things, to improve their lives, to be "como la Oprah" ("like Oprah"). Electra hates her mother, believes she also killed Orestes and will not be satisfied until her mother is dead. After Clemencia finally sets the corpse on fire, Orestes returns and is goaded by *Electricidad* into killing their mother. He goes mad immediately thereafter. A chorus of three wise, wonderful, and often funny neighbor women comments on the action at intervals and adds to its anti-mythical humanity.

An adaptation of *Electra* by Euripides directed by Sonja Moser, American director and academic, presented by Mary-Arrchie Theatre Co., performed by

66 From the director's notes in the University of Idaho Theatre Arts Department's promotional brochure.

67 See *Orestes* below, pp. 250–1. Citations refer to Foley (2003).

68 See Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453a13: it would be suitable to comedy, "if the worst enemies in the story, like Orestes and Aegisthus, should become friends and go off without anybody being killed by anybody."

69 Quotations are from Alfaro (2003).

Illinois State University students (July 5–19, 2012) gives prominence to the rural setting: “Set in John Deere country, this inventive meta-theatrical adaptation of the famous Euripides tragedy is filled with live rock music, humor, teen angst, and sweet, sweet muddy revenge.”⁷⁰

Screen

Michael Cacoyannis (1922–2011) was a major Greek filmmaker, best known for the international hit *Zorba the Greek*. *Electra* (1962), a magnificent full-length black and white movie, is the first of his Euripidean trilogy. The film opens with the prologue, told by the camera⁷¹ (rather than the voice of the Farmer), the music of the sound track, and overtitles. The king returns: the people cheer; Clytemnestra stands on the top of the citadel watching; later she stands with her children to receive her husband; Electra removes her mother’s hand from her shoulder. Agamemnon comes through the Lion Gate, hands his sword to Orestes, embraces Electra, gives his hand to his wife and leads her into the house—as an eagle shrieks its prehistoric cry—and into the bath. Orestes plays with his sword while Electra experiences the death of her father by telepathy. Orestes is spirited away and we see Electra’s sad face filling the screen.⁷² This is a brilliant foretelling of the whole story suited to the cinematic genre. A sword in the first scene will be used in the last. A rebuff is not unnoticed by the camera’s eye: gods are not needed. After this the movie moves into the time of the play. Citizens in the country tell the rest of the prologue. The Farmer comes in his cart to fetch his bride. He is uncomely, but kind. A Greek country woman sings the story of the sun turning aside, reflecting the Golden Lamb ode (the second stasimon of Euripides’ *Electra*), that turns into a Greek folk song about a better day coming. The Farmer continues the song as he drives away.⁷³

Unlike many modern productions, Cacoyannis’ *Electra* retains the chorus. In fact there are several choruses: the one closest to the ancient chorus is of somber country women of various ages, the neighbors of Electra; a second chorus of cheerful girls joins them at one point to invite Electra to accompany

70 Promotional copy from <http://maryarrchie.com/wordpress/history/electra/?lang=en>.

71 MacKinnon (1986) 77.

72 In an interview Cacoyannis explained, “To me, the human face seen in a huge close-up on the screen is even a kind of mask,” McDonald/Winkler (1991) 172. These faces are Cacoyannis’ genius. I will never forget the face of Irene Papas, who plays Clytemnestra, at the end of *Iphigenia*, the last of Cacoyannis’ Euripidean trilogy, as she looks at the ships sailing away and begins to wait for her husband.

73 Cacoyannis captures more than anyone else since Euripides the tragedy of the Farmer; see Roisman/Luschnig (2011) 83. The Farmer is sitting on a hillside watching as Clytemnestra’s chariot climbs to his own tragic home.

them to the festival, only to be rebuffed as in the Euripidean play. Add to these the men who grumble about the political situation to round off the prologue and those who mass around Electra's house after the matricide, and the chorus of masked dancers at Aegisthus' festival. The main chorus leads Electra to Agamemnon's grave where she lays myrtle branches. In Euripides, Electra is not able to visit the grave, which in the film is just a slab of stone. Another change is that Aegisthus and his men chase her from the tomb and throw off her offering; his abuse of the grave was just a rumor in Euripides. In the night we are shown Electra in bed with a fleece around her and the Farmer alone on the floor. That night at the grave Orestes burns incense and places offerings. He and Pylades go through the stark but varied landscape, see Electra at the spring as day is dawning. Orestes is recognized as in the original by a scar, but first the old man (nearly blind) feels his sword, the sword of Agamemnon, and then touches the scar. The Farmer smiles wistfully and leaves. He goes back to work; his part is over. The old man will lead the way to Aegisthus. Electra will plan the murder of her mother. The setting of Aegisthus' sacrifice is changed to a drunken wine festival and the roast is already cooked: they will have a carving contest. Orestes looks like a young Aegisthus in their scene together—is it a coincidence? The dancers clash swords. And the scene switches to Electra and the women waiting. “Let the light come,” she cries and torches are lit all over the landscape. The dawn comes and Clytemnestra approaches in her finery. She looks like a painted Mycenaean votive figure, but her face is cold and cruel. She refuses Electra's hand, and we remember the opening scene when Electra removed her mother's arm from her shoulder. In her speech of justification she plays a role in front of the chorus. Yet she forgives her daughter's preference for her father; she is not proud of what she did; and shows real feeling for Electra's condition, as in Euripides. But her fate is sealed. Electra has pushed Orestes to do the deed. Electra calls her back, but then goes on. The murder is done inside with the chorus miming horror outside. The reliving of the murder is also done inside. Orestes recoils from Electra. Both are overcome by the horror of what they have done. Clytemnestra had struggled, one more chance to let her live, one more chance to see the real flesh, the real life they were destroying. Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are worse than their Euripidean counterparts, with hardly any redeeming qualities, but however villainous, a mother cannot be killed without guilt. Throughout, the chorus builds sympathy for Electra, but in the final scene they form a wall; as Electra approaches they part to let her pass, then become a wall again of immobile faces. Until this point all sympathy is with Electra: her sufferings are real, she genuinely wants to help the farmer;⁷⁴

74 I believe this is true of the Euripidean play, too, but her motives are mixed there.

she does not mock her husband or the old man; she maintains the dignity of a wronged and grieving woman.⁷⁵ After the matricide the chorus can offer no comfort. The three killers come out one by one like actors for their curtain call and go their separate ways. Pylades sets off after Orestes, but Orestes sends him to go with Electra. The ending is without gods, and as sad as, but not more so than the ending of Euripides' tragedy, where the gods offer only an aloof comfort without human understanding.⁷⁶

In 1969 the Italian director Ferdinando Baldi (1927–2007) made *Il Pistolero dell' Ave Maria* (English title: *The Forgotten Pistolero*) in Italian.⁷⁷ As part of an attempt to revitalize the genre some directors of spaghetti-westerns adapted classical revenge plays, in this case, the legend of Orestes and Electra, to the western setting. Peppered by scenes of mass slaughter worthy of the *Odyssey*, the movie takes place in various locations in Texas and Mexico. The denouement is at the *hacienda* of the Carrasco family near Oaxaca. Juan Carrasco, the Agamemnon character, a general in the Mexican army, was murdered long ago on his return from war, shot in the back by his wife Anna (revealed in a flashback); Orestes (Sebastian) escaped with the help of a servant woman. Meanwhile back at the *hacienda* Electra (Isabella) was forced to marry a shopkeeper she did not love, to keep her away from Rafael (the Pylades character), and, as in Euripides, she remained a virgin. Sebastian returns with Rafael to avenge his father's death by killing Tomas, the lover of Anna. Anna regrets her past crimes and is fatally wounded. The movie ends in conflagration as the Carrasco *hacienda* goes up in flames and Sebastian, Isabella, and Rafael ride off into a new forlorn dawn.

Eminent Hungarian director and screenwriter, Miklós Jancsó (1921–2014) directed *Szerelmem, Elektra* ("Electra, My Love," 1974), a magnificently choreographed Hungarian film, with the people as chorus, based on László Gyurkó's 1968 play of the same name.⁷⁸ It is famous for its long takes, having only nine or ten sequences in all. This is an *Electra* without matricide: Clytemnestra has been dead for years, but Electra does not forget the murder of her father. His death is celebrated annually, as in Sophocles' version. In a possible Euripidean

75 In an interview, Irene Papas (who plays Electra) said "Sometimes, when I see Electra, I think Euripides might be angry with us because we gave *Electra* all the rights," McDonald/Winkler (1991) 183.

76 Most of the critics find the ending more tragic without the *dei ex machina*: McDonald (1983) 292–3; cf. MacKinnon (1986) 78; Bakogianni (2011) 159, 189.

77 The hauntingly brilliant soundtrack by Roberto Pregadio can be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5ZaHQFIXdE>.

78 See above, p. 224.

reference, Electra is forced to marry a dwarf, a false marriage, in a peculiarly Eastern-European mode. Aegisthus, the tyrant, is killed in a net by an Orestes, thought dead, but resurrected. The siblings ascend in a red helicopter and Electra tells the fire-bird myth. The message is revolution, revolution now and forever. Electra is not so much interested in revenge as in establishing a just society.⁷⁹

Theo Angelopoulos (1936–2012), widely acclaimed Greek filmmaker and screenwriter, directed *O Thiasos* (“The Travelling Players,” 1975), a stately epic film of modern Greece, nearly four hours long. Events of Greek history and politics from the end of the Fascist government of Metaxas through the Nazi Occupation and the Civil War up to 1952 are seen through the lives of a troupe of traveling actors who reenact the story of Electra and Orestes in their own lives, while endlessly rehearsing and performing a Greek folk play, *Golfo the Shepherdess*. The Father (the Agamemnon character) is a refugee from Asia Minor who joins the Greek army against the Italians in 1940. Before he has even left the sleazy hotel where the company is staying, his wife is in bed with Aegisthus. After his return, he joins the resistance against the German occupiers but is betrayed by the collaborators Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. A brilliant scene, in which every member of the troupe proves his or her Greek nationality to the occupiers (who suspect them of hiding an English spy), by reciting in Greek, ends with Electra screaming “informer” at Aegisthus. Her father is executed in the next scene. Orestes, with the help of his sister, avenges his father by shooting his mother and her lover on stage during a performance to massive applause. Orestes and his friend Pylades are both arrested and tortured for their leftist activities. Pylades finally signs a written denunciation of communism and is released, but Orestes does not. He is tortured by the camp guards, who, like Furies, are compared to beasts of prey, and finally put to death. Too late Electra goes to tend him in prison. Electra and Pylades restart the troupe of travelling players. Leftist idealism keeps remorse for matricide at bay. The film was made during the years of the Junta, under the pretext that the director was exploring the old Greek myth of Electra, and released after its fall.

Shyamaprasad, Indian screenwriter and director (1960–), directed *Elektra* (2010) a film in Malayalam (spoken in the state of Kerala in India where the film is set). The story is based on the versions of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Eugene O’Neill’s *Mourning Becomes Electra* (itself loosely based on the plot of the *Oresteia*).⁸⁰ The father is killed the night he returns home. Electra,

79 See MacKinnon (1986) 117–24.

80 This information is based on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektra_%282010_film%29 and the trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7xdHXcsYI>.

obsessed with her father, goads her brother Edwin into killing their mother. He is seen crying out on the beach in despair, "I killed my own mother!"

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Electra*

Euripides' *Electra* has not always been well-received by scholars. A. W. von Schlegel (1767–1845), German critic, translator, and poet delivered a series of lectures on dramatic Art and Literature in Vienna in 1808. These were published in 1809–1811 as *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur: Vorlesungen* in three volumes. They were translated into English in 1815 and reprinted many times: *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, translated by John Black and A. J. W. Morrison. Lecture 9 is "Comparison between the *Choephoroe* of Aeschylus, the *Electra* of Sophocles and that of Euripides" (pp. 122–33). In it Schlegel concludes that "the *Electra* is perhaps the very worst of Euripides' pieces" (p. 133). He was offended by its "unpoetic obliquity," and "gratuitous torture of our feelings" in making Aegisthus display good-natured hospitality, and by the "despicable repentance" of Orestes and Electra. His criticism has been very influential. H. D. F. Kitto first published *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study* in 1939. It has been read by generations of students not only of classics but of drama and literature. Kitto characterizes both *Electra* and *Orestes* as melodramas rather than tragedies: "they aim first and foremost at being theatrically effective" (p. 348). Such criticism characterizes much of the scholarly reception of the play: see, for example, Bernard Knox (1979) "Euripidean Comedy," Ann Michelini (1987) "Elektra: The 'Low' Style," and Justina Gregory (2000) "Comic Elements in Euripides."

Anastasia Bakogianni (2011) *Electra Ancient and Modern: Aspects of the Reception of the Tragic Heroine* (BICS Suppl. 113) made the present study possible. The monograph begins with an introduction on reception theory, which is followed by a chapter on the three Electras. The bulk of the book is a series of cases studies of Electra receptions in various genres: Chapter 2, "The Song of Electra" which treats Electra in Mozart's *Idomeneo* and Theodorakis' opera *Electra*; Chapter 3 discusses Electra in Victorian painting; and Chapter 4 is an analysis of Cacoyannis' *Electra*. A virtue of this work is her attention throughout to the contemporary context of each of the receptions. Appendix 1 of Bakogianni's monograph lists 116 items dating from the 16th century to the present (ending in 2004) that are receptions of Electra, for which I am most grateful.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

Literature

Marshfield, A. (1982) *The Elektra Poems*. London: Anvil Press Poetry.

Fine Arts

Cowling, E./Mundy, J. (1990) *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Leger, de Chirico, and the new classicism, 1910–1930*. Tate Gallery.

Stage and Screen

Maanen, H. van/Wilmer, S. E. (eds.) (1998) *Theatre worlds in motion: structures, politics and developments in the countries of Western Europe*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Appendix: So Many Electras

Because there are so many Electras in literature and life, disambiguation is in order. Which Electra? Electra, the mythological figure, is common to all the tellings and retellings (plays, novels, operas, poems, comics, pictorial or plastic art, cinema). Well, not quite all. There are several Electras in Greek mythology, the best known *other* Electra is one of the Pleiades, daughter of Atlas. After her are named Elektra Records,⁸¹ the Electra bicycle,⁸² other modes of transportation such as the Buick Electra and the Lockheed Electra, including the one that took Amelia Earhart to her tragic end in 1937.⁸³ A fictional Electra wonders how she got such an exotic name.⁸⁴ In December 2013 the fifth named winter storm was Electra.⁸⁵ None of these can be identified with our Electra, daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.

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- 81 When Elektra Records was formed in 1950, ‘the usual spelling of the Greek mythological Pleiad Electra was changed. [Jac] Holzman famously explained, “I gave her the ‘K’ that I lacked”. Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektra_Records].
 - 82 I have it on good authority from two members of the support team at Electra bicycles that the elegant two-wheeler was named after Elektra records (personal e-mails dated March–April 2014).
 - 83 Earhart’s plane was a Lockheed Model 10 Electra: “The name Electra came from a star in the Pleiades,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed_Model_10_Electra.
 - 84 In *Life at the Shallow End* (2008), Electra Brown, the funny, charming protagonist of Helen Bailey’s breezy series of juvenile novels, wonders why her parents chose her first name: “Electra! What possessed them? What were they thinking of giving me an exotic Greek name when I’m as English as fish and chips and wet bank holiday weekends, and I’ve got bog-standard Brown as a surname?”: <http://www.helenbaileybooks.com/>.
 - 85 What might Clytemnestra have responded to the 12/13/13 headline on the weather channel, “Electra May Ruin Your Weekend”?

Distinguishing receptions of Euripides' *Electra* from Electra the well-known figure of myth⁸⁶ and from the Electras of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* and Sophocles' *Electra* is not easy. The Electra Complex, for example, might be said to apply to every Electra, daughter of Agamemnon, and indeed to any other daughter who loves her father to excess and rejects her mother.⁸⁷ Each of the Electras mourns her father and waits for her brother; each Electra encourages her brother to avenge their father's death. All three Electra-plays treat the return of Orestes to Argos unannounced and *incognito*, the recognition of Orestes and his reunion with Electra, and the killings of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra (with the order reversed in Sophocles). Both *Electras* are full of references to Aeschylus' version, and clearly respond to it: the tokens by which Orestes is identified, the use of vessels (pitchers for libations, an urn of ashes, or a water jug), and the role of Apollo's oracle in motivating Orestes are examples of intentional allusion to the older playwright's masterpiece. Both *Electras* move Electra from the sidelines to the center of the action. In Aeschylus she participates with Orestes and the chorus in the long and violent lyric exchange (*kommós*) that attempts to summon the aid of their dead father's spirit (*Libation Bearers* 306–509), but is dismissed before Orestes turns to the deed (*Libation Bearers* 554). While Sophocles' Electra is a stronger, more tragic character in the opinion of many critics, Euripides' protagonist is the only one to be present at and to participate in the matricide. In Euripides she holds the sword when Orestes recoils from the deed. In Sophocles she remains outside egging him on: her only weapons are words, however potent: "Strike her again if you can" (l. 1415).

The setting of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* and Sophocles' *Electra* is the palace of the Atreidae in Argos (/Mycenae)⁸⁸ where Aegisthus and Clytemnestra rule. In Euripides, there is the same power structure, but the setting has been displaced to a rough country farm dwelling, and Electra married off to a poor, but free, small farmer. She remains a virgin. It is in this alien, yet familiar, setting that Orestes finds her. Only in Euripides does it happen that Orestes never reaches his home. The question of what happens to Argos and its monarchy after the matricide is answered in Aeschylus by *Eumenides*, in which Orestes is tried for matricide, acquitted and allowed to return to rule in Argos. In Sophocles' *Electra*, Orestes has come to reclaim his patrimony (ll. 69–72). At the end of the play the chorus sings of reaching a new and perfect freedom (ll. 1508–10). As in Homer, then, it appears that Orestes is to be king. In Euripides' *Electra*, Orestes will be tried in Athens but is to be permanently exiled from Argos. Electra will go to Pylades' home as his wife.

86 Fortunately, most of what we know of her comes from tragedy: see Meineck *et al.* (2009) xi–xxxii; Luschnig (2013) vii–xviii.

87 See above (pp. 211–2) on Plath's "Electra on Azalea Path". The 2010 Malayalam movie is another example of an Electra with a severe Electra Complex: see above, p. 230.

88 Mycenae and Argos are used interchangeably in tragedy.

Planning for and presentation of the matricide and its aftermath are crucial areas of difference in the treatments. Only in Euripides does Orestes arrive without a plan. He must be guided by an old slave and his sister. In Aeschylus and Sophocles it is reported that Orestes is dead. In Euripides it is reported that Electra has given birth to a son as a ruse to bring Clytemnestra to the country hovel in which Electra is living. In both Aeschylus and Euripides the fact that Orestes must kill his *mother* in order to avenge his father is central and leads him to question the deed moments before he perpetrates it (*Libation Bearers* 899–902, *Electra* 967–77). Not so in Sophocles: neither Orestes nor Electra feels any qualms before or after the matricide. What happens after the matricide? *Libation Bearers*: the bodies are rolled out on the *ekkyklēma* (ll. 973–1006). Orestes displays the robes that entangled his father, justifying the deed but recognizing the tragedy of it (ll. 1016–7). He begins to feel madness coming on as he sets out as a suppliant (ll. 1021–4, 1035–6). Before he can leave the packs of Furies hound him off stage (ll. 1047–62). Sophocles' *Electra*: Orestes enters, his hand dripping with his mother's blood (ll. 1422–3). The siblings care only about doing the same to Aegisthus, who now returns to the palace. The covered body is rolled out and before Aegisthus sees its face, Orestes taunts him with sarcasm: Clytemnestra's body is just a thing (ll. 1470–9). There is no hint of remorse nor of pursuit or purification. Euripides' *Electra*: brother and sister emerge from the hovel in revulsion and despair and sing a second kommos, seeing too late the full horror of what they have done (ll. 1176–1230). The Dioscuri arrive from the sky to end the tragedy, but they do not stop the despair of the brother and sister whose loss of home, of family, of each other remains devastating. Equally devastating is the consciousness of the wrong they have done.

Another characteristic of Euripides' *Electra* is a plethora of *oikeia pragmata* ("every-day objects"): like household utensils, agricultural tools, implements for sacrifice. Food, domestic animals, and clothing—from the rags of Electra and the Old Man to the dazzling royal garb of Clytemnestra and her slaves—receive more attention than in most tragedies. The rustic setting is more suggestive of folktale than tragedy, which usually takes place in front of a royal palace. So is the marriage of Electra to a poor farmer. Such quotidian details have led some critics to describe the play as somehow less than or other than tragic. The poverty and simplicity of the setting as well as the recognition of Orestes (after what seems to many an untragic parody of Aeschylus' recognition scene) by means of a scar are reminiscent of scenes from the *Odyssey* (14; 19. 390–475).⁸⁹

89 To Aristotle, however, both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were prototypes for tragedy (*Poetics* 1449a1), a fact which encourages us to accept a broad definition of the tragic genre, even when Euripides plays with his audience's expectations of what tragedy is.

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Orestes

Cecelia E. Luschnig

After committing matricide, Orestes is sick with guilt and haunted by the Furies. His only relief is sleep. Electra tends him in his sick bed. Helen and Menelaus have arrived, but too late. The chorus enters on tiptoes and whisper-singing. Orestes wakes up, descends into madness and tries to shoot the Furies with a bow. A trial has been set to take place in Argos today to determine the sentence to be meted out against the matricides, death by stoning or some unnamed punishment. An elaborate agōn between Tyndareus and Orestes, followed by a second agōn between Menelaus and Orestes, ends with Orestes deserted and desperate, as the last remnant of the house of Atreus.¹ Supported by Pylades, Orestes attends the trial (brilliantly described by a messenger) at which he and Electra are condemned to death. After this the plot takes a turn from suppliant drama to revenge tragedy.² Orestes and Pylades plot to kill Helen and become heroes; Electra adds the plan to take Hermione hostage and kill her if Menelaus refuses to save them. Helen vanishes as she is being struck. Sweet, kind, accommodating Hermione arrives and is sucked into the trap. Of all the plays in which a post-matricidal Orestes is a character,³ only in Euripides' Orestes does he decide to add to the number of his victims, a fact not lost in many adaptations. Then a Phrygian slave leaps on to the stage and sings. Menelaus returns only to see a small crowd on the roof of the palace: Pylades and Orestes with a sword to Hermione's throat, threatening to kill her and set fire to the palace. Apollo flies in with the divine Helen and puts an end to the slaughter. All will be well: Orestes will be tried and acquitted in Athens (as in Aeschylus, but by the gods rather than citizens) and will return to marry Hermione (as in Andromache) and rule over Argos (as in Homer,

1 Collard (2003) 77 calls it "the most subtly contrived of all scenes incorporating a formal debate." On the cross-generational aspect of the agōn, see Rehm (2003)136.

2 Luschnig (2013) xxix.

3 Orestes is a character in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* and *Eumenides*; Sophocles' *Electra*; Euripides' *Andromache*, *Electra*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and *Orestes* and a prop in *Iphigenia at Aulis*. *Eumenides*, *Andromache*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and *Orestes* take place after the matricide. In *Eumenides* the Furies are present on stage to haunt Orestes and pursue him, but he remains rational. In *Iphigenia in Tauris* a mad scene of Orestes tormented by imaginary Furies is described by the messenger (on this tragedy, see below, pp. 259–91). In *Orestes*, the mad scene is staged, with Orestes battling unseen Furies (Erinyes).

Aeschylus, Sophocles). *Electra and Pylades will wed and live happily ever after* (as in *Electra and Iphigenia in Tauris*). *Menelaus is advised to remarry*.⁴ *The political aspect of the play, its depiction of a society in dissolution, despair, and chaos, is prominent in the reception*.⁵

In Literature

Orestes was immensely popular in antiquity, judging from the copious *scholia* (pieces of ancient commentary), a few of which refer to contemporary productions, numerous manuscripts, and its place in the canon of plays to be read and studied in school.

Of Euripides' *House of Atreus* plays, only *Iphigenia at Aulis* (produced after 406 BC) is later than *Orestes*. In it *Orestes* is present as an infant in arms, brought to Aulis to please his father, and later used in Iphigenia's plea for her life (*Iphigenia at Aulis* 1118–9, 1241–5): generations of domestic violence and childhood trauma have taken their toll and played their role in creating the sociopath that *Orestes* had become in *Orestes*.

Among citations in the ancient critics, *Orestes* is specifically mentioned in Aristophanes' comedy *Frogs* 303–4 (405 BC) referring to the actor Hegelochus' misaccentuation at *Orestes* 279, when instead of saying "out of the waves I see a calm," the word for "calm" came out "weasel."⁶ Aristotle (384–322 BC) uses the figure of Menelaus in *Orestes* as an example of unnecessary depravity of character (*Poetics* 1454a21, 1461b31) and the grammarian Aristophanes of Byzantium (257–180s BC) goes a step further saying: "Though the drama is among those much admired on stage, it is most depraved in its characters: except for Pylades, they are all bad" (*Hypothesis*, ll. 20–1).⁷ Why is Pylades, who suggests murdering Helen, excepted? It must be because of his undying loyalty, in this and other plays. Another influential and much discussed comment in the *Hypothesis* is "The drama has a dénouement that is rather comic" (l. 9), referring, I suppose, to the crowded rooftop scene and the divine dispensations

4 A second marriage is not in the canonical legend, but Menelaus did have a son, Megapenthes, by a slave woman, *Odyssey* 4. 10–1, 15. 102.

5 Not lost on the critics: see, for example, Hartigan (1991) 156.

6 See Schwartz (1887), *scholion* to *Orestes* 279, for other comic poets who mocked Hegelochus' mistake: the poet Strattis in *Anthroporrhaistes* ("Man-breaker"), perhaps a pun on the name Orestes, and Sannyrion in *Danae* (both late 5th century BC).

7 The *Hypothesis* (a blurb, or theatrical note) can be found in various scholarly editions; the line numbers here refer to Schwartz (1887) 93.

given by Apollo with their promise of future weddings. The comic element, already noted early in the tradition, is pervasive in the reception of *Orestes*.

In the fragmentary comedy *Sicyonians*, Menander (342–291 BC) imitates the messenger speech of *Orestes* (ll. 866–956) describing the trial of Orestes before the Argives, in a narrative about an assembly in Eleusis concerning the status of the captured and wrongly enslaved Philoumene (ll. 176–271). There are several direct quotes, some close paraphrases, and verbal echoes. *Mutatis mutandis* the narratives are generally similar: the roar of the crowd, shedding of tears, shouts of approval and disapproval. If the audience was familiar with Euripides' play, as seems likely, the effect would be more comic.

In Roman literature, *Doulorestes* ("Orestes the Slave") of Pacuvius (playwright of the 2nd century BC) treats the material of the Electra plays, but the lines "It pains me to say my father's name / shames me to say my mother's" (*frr.* 138–40)⁸ are reminiscent of *Orestes* 557. And the ending of Pacuvius' piece (*frr.* 163–6) with Pylades and Orestes vying to die for each other reflects Euripides (*Orestes* 1064–96, 1245).

The mad scene in *Orestes* figures in the work of several Latin poets.⁹ In Vergil (70–19 BC), *Aeneid* 4. 471–3, Dido imagines herself like mad Pentheus,

or Agamemnon's son Orestes, [who] pursued on stage (*scaenis*),
flees from his mother armed with torches and black snakes,
and the avenging Furies sit on the doorstep.

The word *scaenis* ("on/from the stage," l. 471) suggests that Vergil is thinking of Orestes in a theatrical performance, which could refer to several scenes in *Eumenides*, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 285–90, or *Orestes* 255–7. In the *Satires* 2. 3. 140–1, Horace (65–8 BC) paraphrases *Orestes* 264–5, saying that the hero spoke ill of Electra by calling her one of the Furies, though he did no other harm after the madness took him. Ovid (43 BC–17 AD) in *Amores* 1. 7. 9–10, feeling regret for his fit of temper that led him to strike his lover, speaks of "Orestes, the evil avenger who dared call for weapons against the unnamed goddesses (i.e., the Erinyes)," which might refer to *Orestes* 268–74 where he calls for the bow that Apollo gave him to ward off the Furies. In the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus (died 90 AD) Medea's sleep is agitated as when "Orestes, roiled by avengers and blind fears, grabs a sword to strike at his cruel mother's troops . . . until he collapses in exhaustion before his unhappy sister" (7. 147–52). Among forms of madness in his *Satire* 14 Juvenal (late 1st to early 2nd century AD) lists "one man

8 Fragments of Pacuvius are as numbered in Warmington (1936).

9 I am grateful to Enrico Medda (2014) 450–1 for these references.

in his sister's arms terrorized by the faces and fire of the Eumenides" (ll. 283–4). Only in the tragedies of Euripides does a mad Orestes fight off imagined Furies.

"Longinus," conventional name for a literary critic of the 1st or 3rd century AD, author of *On the Sublime*, praises the scene of Orestes fantasizing the Furies (Euripides, *Orestes* 255–7), noting that Euripides is most successful at the emotions, madness and love (*On the Sublime* 15.2; cf. 15.8).

Orestes was rarely staged or adapted in modern times before the middle of the 20th century. As it has been noted, "Only after World War II, and particularly with the social and political changes of the 1960s, did the atmosphere of chaotic violence and the political overtones of the play begin to attract interest."¹⁰ An exception is the between-the-wars play *Daughters of Atreus* (1936)¹¹ by Robert Turney (American actor and playwright) which, though based on *Iphigenia, Agamemnon*, the two *Electras*, begins to resemble *Orestes* at the end of Act 3 (pp. 124–6).¹² After the murder of Clytemnestra, Orestes is tormented. Electra blames herself and he sees her as one of his tormenters (cf. Euripides, *Orestes* 264–5): "ELEKTRA: O my brother!—My brother! / ORESTES: Away from me!" Orestes is fighting phantom Furies with his sword:

ORESTES: Hush! Hush! They slip away before my sword and hide among the shadows there. I cannot kill them! I must hide. Hush! Away! Away! I am not afraid of you! Lie there, and there! Through and through and still not dead! I'm not afraid of you. I am Orestes, the mother-slayer!

ELEKTRA: O God!

ORESTES: Who is that standing pale in the moonlight?

ELEKTRA: There is no one, Orestes. There is no one.

ORESTES: Mother! O Mother!"

At last Electra comforts him as if he were a sick child, as she does in *Orestes*.

The Prodigal (1962), a play by American dramatist and critic Jack Richardson (1934–2012), features an apathetic Orestes caught between his interventionist father and an egalitarian Aegisthus. He finds that however much he wants a simple life with a wife who "is kind, cooks well, [and] keeps an immaculate

10 Medda (2014) 451; see also Wright (2008) 14–5; Hartigan (1995) 124–7. Voltaire's play *Orestes* (1750) covers the plot of the Electra plays and is treated in the chapter on *Electra* (see above, pp. 203–4).

11 See *Electra* above, pp. 207–8.

12 Page numbers refer to Turney (1936). In quotations, the names of characters are spelled as they are in the work.

house" (p. 97) he is forced into being part of his father's legend and becoming "a typical hero" (pp. 107–8).¹³

Two novels about Electra¹⁴ also include incidents from Euripides' *Orestes*: Henry Treece's *Electra* (1963) touches on the trial and condemnation of Electra, Orestes, and Pylades; and the double wedding of Orestes to Hermione and Pylades to Electra (as is announced by Apollo at the end of *Orestes*). In Kerry Greenwood's *Electra: A Delphic Women Mystery* (2013), Orestes is haunted and driven mad by the Furies and tended by Electra and Pylades. Apollo gives Orestes the bow of horn to fight off the Erinyes (cf. Euripides, *Orestes* 268–70). And, as foretold in *Orestes* (1648–52, 1660), Orestes is tried by the gods (on Mount Olympus rather than in Athens) and acquitted, after which he returns to Argos to be king. Both novels treat the future of Orestes, but through Electra's later life: in Treece, Orestes is a throwback, a murderous "hero"; Greenwood makes him more human and capable of resuming a normal life.

Joyce Carol Oates (1938–), prolific American novelist, recognizes the political side of the legend in her novel, *Angel of Light* (1981), set mostly in Washington, D.C. Her Orestes is a college student named Owen who takes after his Euripidean counterpart (in *Electra*) in his undigested book-learning, until he decides to become a terrorist. It takes a certain genius to sustain a 434-page novel without a single admirable, engaging, or even likeable character, except possibly the dead guy, the Agamemnon figure, Maurice (Maurie) Halleck, descendant of John Brown, hence the book's title.¹⁵ Though Oates dedicates this novel to Robert Fagles (masterful translator of the *Oresteia*) for his service "in the House of Atreus," this is hardly Aeschylus. Owen (Maurie's son), after brutally killing his mother, blows up their family home intentionally ("Bring it all down, Orestes said. And said no more," p. 379), with himself in it, unintentionally (or not?). There was no Apollo to stop him, no Hermione to make him want to live, only a plutocratic supporter of "revolutionaries" to flatter and entrap him. After the matricide, Owen remembers his childhood and weeps. He stops to sleep, finding solace in his infancy with his mother watching over him. He has killed the housekeeper, as well, because "no one is innocent." Three bodies were found in the rubble of the Halleck house. The daughter Kirsten (a pale stand-in for Electra) was unable to kill her mother's lover, though she stabbed him repeatedly.

13 Page numbers refer to Richardson (1960).

14 For both, see *Electra* above, pp. 213–4; 218–9. References are to Treece (1963) and Greenwood (2013) in the cited bibliography for *Electra* (above, pp. 235 [Greenwood], 237 [Treece]).

15 Henry David Thoreau referred to the famous abolitionist John Brown as an "angel of light." Page references are from Oates (1981).

The 276-page novel, *Orrie's Story*¹⁶ (1990) by Thomas Berger (popular American novelist, 1924–2014), though it has a dark side, includes a taste of the comic, starting with the names of the characters: Agamemnon is Augie Mencken, a ne'er-do-well who has left his family and becomes a war hero by buying a uniform from an officer down on his luck. His wife, Esther, is having a long-time affair with his cousin, E. G., a slum lord. Of the children, Gena (the missing Iphigenia) has run away to Hollywood and ended up in a religious cult. Ellie (Electra) is in high school and Orrie (Orestes: whose son is he, Augie's or E. G.'s?) is away at college when Augie is drowned by his wife and her lover, after the plan of electrocuting him by having a fan fall into his bathtub goes comically awry because the cord is too short for the fan to reach the bath water. The verdict of the coroner is accidental death. With the help of his college roommate, Paul Leeds (the loyal Pylades), Orrie comes home for his father's funeral. Ellie insists that Augie was murdered and tries to convince her brother to take action. He does not accept her story, but distrusts E. G. and when he finally takes up his destiny, it is because E. G. is abusing Esther physically. Orrie shoots and kills Esther by accident. After the matricide Ellie tends the distraught Orrie, whose only solace, as in Euripides' *Orestes*, is sleep. He is persecuted by the prosecutor Bernard J. Furie and defended by Anthony Pollo (A. Pollo, his defender in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*) before the judge Thea Palliser. Paul Leeds proposes to Ellie. Orrie is acquitted but has lost all interest in life until the lovely niece of his foster parents lifts him out of his depression. Her name? You guessed it: Hermione. Orrie inherits E.G.'s ill-gotten "estate" in this tragi-comical retelling, that stresses the banality of family tragedy, even one as dramatic as that of Agamemnon's children.

The short novel *Quesadillas* (2014), translated from the 2012 Spanish novel, *Si Viviéramos en un Lugar Normal* ("If We Lived in a Normal Place") by Mexican writer Juan Pablo Villalobos (1973–) is the story of a dysfunctional household, told by Orestes, the second child of a large family, in which all the children, including a younger sister Electra, are named after characters from Greek letters or mythology. Their home is ultimately destroyed but restored through magic "realism" with the help of a remote control device and the disappeared young twins Castor and Pollux, translated by space aliens to the stars, who reappear as *dei ex machina* (as in *Electra* or like Apollo and Helen in *Orestes*). The potential tragedy is turned into comedy in this satiric novel. Orestes is always aware of the meaning and irony of his name and those of his siblings (pp. 119–20):¹⁷

16 See Berger (1990).

17 Page numbers refer to the English-language edition, Villalobos (2014).

Names are destiny. My father seemed to remember this for a moment; his face clouded over at the possibility that I would act up to my own name-sake and start brutally murdering everyone. But I wasn't cut out to do something like that, not even to commit suicide. What's more, my sister was too young to incite me to deal out cruel revenge.

And he is aware of the potential tragedy associated with his name and circumstances as he decides to betray his family: "At last I was really living up to my name: receiving secret assignments, plotting conspiracies, carrying out despicable tasks" (p. 129), and "My first attempt at manipulating family betrayals was turning into a fiasco; I had been demoted to the tame role of messenger. Perhaps they should have called me Hermes instead" (p. 130). Which Orestes? The randomness and chaos of events and the politics of the local community, conspired against him, point more to the Euripidean Orestes (of his eponymous play and of *Electra*). Towards the end of the novel, Orestes speculates on his mother's role, if this were to become a Greek tragedy:

And what was my mother to do with her emotions now? It wouldn't do anyone any good if she were to focus on the misery of having lost two children, the frustration of having her house pulled down and the distress of her eldest son's being incarcerated. There were too many Greek precedents in this story to underestimate what would happen if she were given one of those time-honored leading maternal roles (pp. 142–3).

In this tragicomic treatment of *Orestes*, the hero, nicknamed Oreó, returns to his family and his life of endless competition for his mother's quesadillas.

Finally, the Canadian poet and translator Anne Carson (1950–) published *An Oresteia* in 2009, putting together Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Electra*, and Euripides' *Orestes* for a new perspective on the legend: "from myth to mockery" (Introduction, x).¹⁸ The brilliant translation/ adaptation mixes the colloquial with high poetic language and is often humorous, sometimes poignant, as at line 255, "All we have is us."

18 Quotations are from Carson (2009).

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

The legend of Orestes and Electra was popular in ancient art,¹⁹ but no works can be definitely assigned to *Orestes*. According to the leading scholar on the representation of tragedy in ancient vase painting, Oliver Taplin, “*Phoenician Women* and *Orestes* were among Euripides’ best-known plays (especially *Orestes*), yet neither has, as far as I know, left any distinct mark on surviving vase-painting.”²⁰

The motif “Orestes Pursued by the Furies” was treated by several 19th and 20th century painters, though it is not possible to relate any of these directly to Euripides’ *Orestes*. An example by the Austrian painter and scenic designer Carl Rahl (1812–1865) dates from 1852.²¹ Orestes is naked but for a red cloak that flows behind him. He holds his arms over his head as he is set upon by three grim-visaged Erinyes who swirl around him. One holds a fiery and smoking torch which inflames the central section of this otherwise dark, melodramatic painting. In *The Remorse of Orestes* or *Orestes Pursued by the Furies* (1862) by French academic painter William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825–1905), Orestes is naked except for a discreet white drapery. He holds his hands over his ears. Behind him Clytemnestra in a white dress, draped in a disarranged red cloak, with a dagger in her heart, is falling back and held up by one of the Furies. Another holds a torch. All are semi-clad and angrily swarm their victim. Bouguereau was known for his genre paintings, mythological scenes, and interest in the human body.²² *Orestes Pursued by the Furies* (1921, 348 × 317.5 cm) is one of a series of murals by American portrait painter, John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), commissioned by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Against an orange background, a pallid, naked, Orestes, holding his arms in front of him as if to keep away his pursuers, is swarmed by muscular, zombie-eyed Furies (ten of them) with long blond hair, stretching out hands grasping snakes and raised torches. On the right of this painting, the least realistic of our examples, the dead Clytemnestra, with a knife wound in her heart, bares her breast

19 For examples, see Prag (1985); Sarian/Machaira (1994).

20 Taplin (2007) 156.

21 Oil painting, 154 × 202 cm., at the Augusteum in Oldenbourg, Germany.

22 The 227 × 278 cm. painting belongs to the collection of the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Virginia. It can be seen here: <http://www.chrysler.org/ajax/load-collection-item/69>.

as she floats up from her fallen position.²³ The presence of Clytemnestra in these paintings suggests Euripides, *Orestes* 255–6 or *Iphigenia in Tauris* 281–9; Clytemnestra's bared breast calls to mind *Orestes* 526–8 as well as Euripides, *Electra* 1205–6.

Music

A papyrus fragment from about 200 BC, rare for its musical notation, has survived for lines 338–44 of the first stasimon of *Orestes*.²⁴ Various attempts to reconstruct and arrange the music have been made: one, produced by Atrium Musicae de Madrid on the recording *Musique de la Grèce Antique*²⁵ ("Music of Ancient Greece") directed by Gregorio Paniagua (1978) on Harmonia Mundi; another using reconstructed instruments by De Organographia, *Music of the Ancient Greeks* (1995) on Pandourion Records.

Modern musical receptions have ranged from the high art of opera to Off-Broadway musical theatre to heavy metal. In 1968 the opera *Orestes* (based on Euripides) by Welsh composer Daniel Jones (1912–1993) was aired on BBC Radio 4.²⁶ Greg Rozakis (1943–1989), American actor and playwright, wrote and directed a rock musical (plus bouzoukees) version of Euripides' *Orestes* (1970, revived 1973) on the theme of intergenerational strife.²⁷ The American alternative rock band, named A Perfect Circle, cut the song *Orestes* for the album *Mer de Noms*²⁸ ("Sea of Names," 2000) which includes the lyrics "Gotta cut away, clear away, snip away, and sever this umbilical residue keeping me from killing you."

Dance

To my knowledge, there are no choreographic works specifically inspired by this Euripidean play.

23 The painting is in the vault above the main stairway at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. An image is available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Singer_Sargent,_John_-_Orestes_Pursued_by_the_Furies_-_1921.jpg.

24 The fragment can be viewed here: <http://www.wdl.org/en/item/4309/>. The actual object is in the Papyrus Collection of the Austrian National Library (Vienna Papyrus G 2315).

25 It can be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQJxDhuFiBU>.

26 *Orestes* (1968), accessed at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/7259>.

27 Accessed at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/9906>. See also Smith (1973).

28 The album can be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDSuU38rMmw>; lyrics are found at <http://artists.letsingit.com/a-perfect-circle-album-mer-de-noms-fld8cf>.

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

In 1968, Polish intellectual, Jan Kott (1914–2001) put on stage an anti-establishment version of *Orestes* using William Arrowsmith's translation at the University of California, Berkeley.²⁹ The play was set in Washington, D.C. Clips of the war in Vietnam and anti-draft demonstrations were projected onto the backdrop; music by John Cage and the Rolling Stones enhanced the darkness of the tragedy's message. The U.S. Capitol went up in flames. Apollo was represented by a huge model of the Statue of Liberty.

In 1971 South African playwright, director, anti-apartheid activist, Athol Fugard (1932–), staged *Orestes*, an experiment in “imagistic action, the silence interspersed with non-verbal sounds, snatches of song and only three hundred words of spoken text.”³⁰ The play conflates the Orestes legend with the story of John Harris, a white South African, who placed a suitcase full of explosives next to a bench marked “For Whites Only” in the Johannesburg Railway Station in 1964 in protest against government race policies. An older woman was killed and twenty-three were injured, including her grandchild. Unlike Orestes, Harris was not just convicted of sabotage and murder but was actually hanged in 1965. In Fugard's play, Orestes carries a suitcase of newspapers, which he fashions into bombs. The bombs go off. “You cannot witness destruction without being damaged,” Fugard writes.³¹

American playwright and screenwriter (1940–), David Rabe developed (through a series of productions from 1968–1974; revived in 1994 and 2013), a disturbing and talky play *The Orphan*, an Orestes-tragedy/comedy complete with weed, psychedelic mushrooms, the Manson Family, baby-killing, the war in Vietnam, and the space-time continuum. Orestes, originally reluctant, at last viciously slits the throats of both Clytemnestras (1 and 2, representing her at different ages) and feels “incredibly good” about it, reminding us of the Orestes who is more than willing to kill his aunt and cousin.

A 45-minute version of *Orestes* is one act of “The Gods” the third section of *The Greeks: Ten Greek Plays Given as a Trilogy*, translated and adapted by John Barton (co-founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company) and Kenneth Cavander (prolific British playwright), first produced in 1979 and frequently

29 See Hartigan (1995) 124–5; Macintosh (2011).

30 McMurtry (1998) 105; see also Hardwick/Stray (2008) 377; Dominik (2010) 120.

31 There is no written script, but Fugard writes about the experience in “Orestes: an experiment in theatre as described in a letter to an American friend,” published in Gray (1978) 81–93.

revived. The basic plot is retained but the play is much reduced: the *agōn* suffers severe cutting, while Apollo's responsibility is enhanced. The aim was to give Greek Tragedy a fresh look, by presenting "lucid, terse translation and a light, non-indulgent, non-tragic production style."³²

In 1980 Adrienne Kennedy, renowned African-American playwright, was commissioned to adapt Euripides' *Electra* and *Orestes* for production by the acting students at the Julliard School of Music. The plays are shortened (especially *Orestes*), modernized, and simplified: for example, Electra's self-pity is removed, her scorn and sarcasm much reduced in *Electra*; the *agōn* and messenger's speech are almost eliminated from *Orestes* along with the conspirators' desperate self-justification, so that the plays lack the Euripidean bite, though the plots move along swiftly. The *deus ex machina* is cut from *Electra*, but retained in *Orestes*. The aim was to "simplify and declassicize the piece for a contemporary New York audience"³³ while keeping the mythic element. Words in ancient Greek are scattered throughout both plays at highly emotional moments.

In the introductory notes to his play *Clytemnestra* (staged 1983),³⁴ Tadashi Suzuki, renowned Japanese playwright and intellectual, writes of Apollo's argument in *Eumenides* on who is the "real parent:"

The fact that a man who has experienced such agonies can only take on the pallid existence of a figure in a landscape, and that a god who does not actually exist can spurt forth nonsense as a theatrical reality that pleases an audience, certainly suggests that, more than 2,000 years ago, Greek society had reached a level of ripeness rapidly approaching decadence. I believe that Japanese society strongly resembles that earlier situation. It was the significance of that resemblance that surprised me above all. (p. 122)

This could just as well be said of Euripides' *Orestes* who uses this argument (ll. 551–6) to his mother's father (!). Scene 9 of *Clytemnestra* "requotes"³⁵ the speeches of Tyndareus and *Orestes* from *Orestes* (545–629): the court of scene 8 is interrupted by Tyndareus, who hits *Orestes* with his umbrella and pleads for the death penalty for *Orestes* and *Electra* (pp. 153–6).

32 Barton (1981) VII.

33 Wetmore (2003) 93.

34 Suzuki (1986) 121–58 (page numbers of the above quotations refer to this). On this work, see also above, p. 225.

35 Suzuki writes of this work, "I have actually reconstructed the story, 'requoted' it, as it were," (1986) 121.

Vktsms: Orestes in Scenes (1985) by Michael McClure (1932–), beat poet and playwright, is an experimental, absurdist play in which Orestes, Electra, and Pylades kill Helen and Hermione and their slaves. “After the murder,” writes McClure of his brutal, but also brutalized murderers, “Orestes, Elektra, and Pylades are metamorphosed into war chariots. Helen is metamorphosed into a star” (p. 103).³⁶ As in Euripides, Orestes blames Menelaus and suspects him of planning to usurp Argos. Of the murder of Helen, one of the slaves says: “Pylades had a lot to do with it. They were blood crazy. Who knows what it meant to them. Who knows what they thought they were doing” (p. 111). Pylades has the best lines, among them: “We are the furies!” and “Part of honor is to win” (p. 141). Chaos, bloodlust, dehumanization of victims and agents (or perhaps everybody is a victim as the title suggests) are regular parts of this and every “Orestes for our time.” Only the machinery of war can truly represent their nature. Even the play’s title is a non-word, so reduced to its vowelless essence that it is only barely recognizable.

*Orestes 2.0*³⁷ by Charles Mee, American academic, playwright, and re-maker of Greek myths, opened in 1992 in San Diego and New York and has been revived often. The setting is a hospital for injured war veterans (in the context of the first Gulf War) into which the tragedy of Orestes is intruded and, by a kind of scenic bifurcation, it is also the palace of Atreus. Wounded warriors and their nurses, along with radio voices take the role of the chorus. One of the most effective devices is a soldier with tape over his mouth who sometimes is allowed to speak; at Menelaus’ entrance he delivers a Homeric catalogue of deaths that morphs into a description of modern war dead. Violence is pervasive: “It’s a nightmare really,” is a refrain, repeated six times throughout the play. Apollo appears with a blow-up sex-toy doll to represent the deified Helen. He is “like a game-show host [there] to sort out who wins what.”³⁸ “Mee’s characters live in a world marked by long years of war, governmental chaos, individuals who take violence into their own hands and deny that their deeds are wrong.”³⁹

Orestes: I Murdered My Mother by Jeff Cohen (American playwright and director) opened in Los Angeles in 1993 and in 1996 in New York. The matricide becomes sensationalized by the media on the talk show circuit. “In the age of *Oprah* and *Hard Copy*, television does indeed provide its own synthetic equivalents to ancient Attic tragedy, turning family horror stories into public forums and serving up fast-fix catharses,” writes the reviewer in the *New York Times*.⁴⁰

36 Quotations are from McClure (1985).

37 The script is available at <http://www.charlesmee.org/orestes.shtml>.

38 McDonald (1993) 79.

39 Hartigan (2011) 45.

40 Brantley (1996).

In the City of Paradise (based on *Oresteia* and the three other Electra-Orestes plays of Sophocles and Euripides), by Mark Fleishman (South African professor, director, and playwright), was staged in Cape Town in 1998. The play deals with racial tensions in post-apartheid South Africa during the Truth and Reconciliation hearings. Electra and Orestes are tried and convicted of matricide. As the chorus is about to attack them a herald “announces that the judges have decided to grant amnesty to them and all others who give a truthful account of their deeds so the cycle of violence and vengeance is broken.”⁴¹ And, “The gasp from the audience that greeted this pronouncement showed that they had recognised their own situation in the dramatisation.”⁴² Unfortunately Clytemnestra’s parents, Leda and Tyndareus, do not accept the verdict: suggesting the message that national reconciliation has yet to be attained and will not be achieved until amnesty for past political crimes can be universally accepted.

The Murders at Argos (first performed at the New York Fringe, in 2000) by David Foley, American playwright, includes the murder of Agamemnon, but is more an adaptation of Euripides’ *Orestes* than of the *Oresteia*, especially in Act 2. The play began as a response to

the rash of schoolyard shootings that had taken place around America, most infamously at Columbine High School in Colorado. . . . The crux of the Orestes story is that he is both innocent and guilty, and the horror of the high school shootings is the combination of young innocence and monstrous guilt. A couple of years ago, I watched a tv documentary about a boy in Oregon who, at the age of fifteen, had killed his parents and two of his classmates. At the end of the show, they played his tape-recorded confession. He was hysterical. The words tore out of him between wracked sobs of grief and horror: ‘I dragged her up into the basement after I shot her and she was still alive and I said that I loved her and I shot her . . . I shot her again so she wouldn’t know I killed her . . . I loved my mom.’ This was Orestes.⁴³

The play has much in common with Euripides’ *Orestes*: the presence of Menelaus, Helen, and Tyndareus; the trial at Argos. Orestes is asleep in his

41 Dominik (2010) 120–1; (2013) 109–10; see also Hardwick/Stray (2008) 378; Mezzabotta (1999). On the importance of workshop theatre in the new South Africa in reconstructing social relationships, see Hardwick (2010) 320.

42 Mezzabotta (1999).

43 Foley (2003) from the author’s introduction: 8–9.

prison cell with furies hovering around him. Tyndareus speaks for executing Orestes. The Argives are tied (as in *Eumenides*), but Menelaus casts the tie-breaking vote, usurping Athena's role. The dialogue is smart and irreverent. Here Menelaus tries to talk Orestes out of going through with the trial; a door could conveniently be left open:

Well, however the trial comes out, it's a headache for me. Agamemnon's friends are gonna ask why I didn't just give you a medal and adopt you. Clytemnestra's friends are gonna wonder why you're not being stoned to death outside the city limits. (p. 53)

But Orestes insists on a trial so he can be "clean." The plot is chaotic, almost random, as in *Orestes*, but even more far-flung. After the trial Orestes is taken by Iphigenia to a temple by a lake: we enter *Iphigenia in Tauris* after a fashion (pp. 76–8).

Adaptations of Orestes proliferate after the destruction of the World Trade Center and the retaliation for it. The stunning *Orestes: Blood and Light* (2006) by British playwright, Helen Edmundson (1964–), is an innovative adaptation influenced by the religious fantasies and fanaticism that led to both the Bush wars and the terrorist attacks. Pylades is gone, replaced by an even more assertive Electra; there is no chorus; Hermione is a babe-in-arms, born during the wanderings of the reunited Helen and Menelaus. Orestes is haunted, not by Furies, but by his mother whom he cannot escape. Electra has infantile fantasies of being rocked in Apollo's arms (p. 12). The play ends, as the palace burns, with Orestes stepping off the balcony, holding his infant cousin over the railing, declaring himself to be a god.⁴⁴

The Exiles (2007, at La Mama annex in New York) a play by Theodora Skipitares, American sculptor, theatre director, and artist, is an adaptation of Euripides *Orestes*, also drawing on Sartre's *The Flies* (1943), that uses two-thirds life-size traditional Japanese puppets as the characters. It is part of a series of plays based on Greek epic and drama that comment on the Iraq war. In her program notes Skipitares calls Helen, the cause of the Trojan War, the "first weapon of mass destruction."⁴⁵

Also in 2007 Yael Farber, South African playwright and director, produced *Molara*, the story of Clytemnestra, Electra and Orestes, based on various tragedies, in Johannesburg. In an interview with *The New Black* magazine, Farber said of the inspiration for the play:

44 References are to Edmundson (2006).

45 Moore (2007); see also O'Donnell (2007).

The inspiration behind 'Molora' was a strong desire to represent to the world the extraordinary acts of grace and general transcendent ability of the everyman and woman in South Africa who was able to lead South Africa away from what seemed like the inevitable continuation of the cycles of vengeance that usually follow gross human rights violations.⁴⁶

Of the play's title, Farber explains:

In the long nights following the devastating attack on the World Trade Centre, amid the grief, recriminations and the Bush administration's indiscriminate wielding of revenge, a fine white powdery substance gently floated down upon heart-broken New York. . . . Molora (the Sesotho word for 'ash') is the truth we must all return to. . . .⁴⁷

The chorus is performed by The Ngqoko Cultural Group, split-tone singing elders from the South African village of Lady Frere, who are committed to maintaining the indigenous music and traditions of rural Xhosa communities.⁴⁸ Clytemnestra testifies using the speech she gives after murdering her husband in *Agamemnon*. Electra answers her from the speech Euripides' *Electra* spits at Aegisthus' body (Euripides, *Electra* 907–56). Before the Truth Commission Clytemnestra demonstrates how she tortured her daughter. When the time comes, Orestes cannot kill his mother. The women of the chorus save Electra from taking revenge herself. The cycle is broken, with fewer murders rather than more.

In the performance piece, *Orestes Remembered*, part 3 of *The Furies Project* (2009), conceived and directed by Katherine Noon for The Ghost Road Company (a Los Angeles-based theatrical collective), three furies, friends of Clytemnestra, hound Orestes with stories and family photographs from his past.⁴⁹

Orestes Terrorist, translated and adapted by Mary Kay Gamel (a classical scholar best known for her work on Greek tragedy in performance) into a new play was produced at The University of California, Santa Cruz in 2011, directed by Danny Scheie, with music by Philip Collins.⁵⁰ The setting is a repressive

46 Otas (2008).

47 Farber (2008) 8.

48 Farber (2008) 12.

49 Information about the play and the company is from <http://ghostroad.org/orestes/>.

50 Event announcement: http://arts.ucsc.edu/news_events/orestes. Information for this brief notice comes from the review by Macintosh (2011).

failed state where violence reigns. It uses the clichés of modern culture from cable TV news to hip-hop to “fifteen minutes of fame.” This modern retelling, like photo-shop, enhances latent or at least putative aspects of the Euripidean original, such as the erotic relationship of Orestes and Pylades and Electra’s incestuous fixation on her brother, political corruption and the inanity of the gods. It sounds like a breath-taking production.⁵¹

American playwright Anne Washburn calls her 2011 play *Orestes: An Antic Tragedy* (also called *Orestes: A Tragic Romp*) a “transadaptation.” The script follows Euripides fairly closely, but with changes that make it more contemporary in language and feeling, often humorous and ironic. The choral odes are most changed. They are more emotional and immediate and though poetic are less lyrical and intellectual. For example in the second stasimon the chorus as a group alternates with a soloist; it makes use of rhyme and is printed in capital letters. Euripides *Orestes* 827–30 is translated, “DARLING NO DARLING NO DARLING NO” and repeated five times (pp. 37–8).⁵² The choral tag line (Euripides, *Orestes* 1691–3) is turned into a “paean to Apollo” (p. 65) with other comic effects (the cast members all have Apollo flags to wave) that indicate the absurdity and emptiness of the god’s dispensations.

Very recently, on January 29, 2014 The Hellenic Bar Association of Illinois staged *The Trial of Orestes* as a fund-raiser for the National Hellenic Museum in Chicago with an all-star cast of defense attorneys and prosecutors (including special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald).⁵³ The trial resulted in a hung jury, but the audience of six hundred voted to acquit.⁵⁴ May 2014, *Elegant Degradation*, a reworking of Charles Mee’s *Orestes 2.0* for the 2010s to include the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other atrocities around the world, was performed by students at the New School in New York City. “Elegant degradation” a term from engineering used to refer to machines that have been subjected to repeated stress but, though they may appear sound on the surface, are weakened so much that they eventually break down, is the play’s metaphor for the current state of the world.⁵⁵

51 The *deus ex machina* scene can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thIGIqvZmw>.

52 References from Washburn (2011).

53 <https://www.nationalhellenicmuseum.org/trial-orestes/>.

54 <http://usa.greekreporter.com/2014/02/06/orestes-found-not-guilty-in-national-hellenic-museums-trial/>.

55 Mumford (2014).

Screen

Orestes (by whatever name) is a character in several movies, but none of them is based primarily on Euripides' *Orestes*.⁵⁶ Roger Macfarlane, a Classics professor at Brigham Young University, considers *The Manchurian Candidate* (both the 1959 novel by Richard Condon and the John Frankenheimer film of 1962) a "Cold War Oresteia,"⁵⁷ though *Oresteia* is used rather loosely. The stories of family life told by the protagonist Raymond Shaw are said to be "like listening to Orestes gripe about Clytemnestra." Shaw has been brainwashed to kill the just nominated Presidential candidate, but instead kills his mother, stepfather, and himself.

Visionary and controversial Italian film director Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975) made *Appunti per un' Orestiade Africana* ("Notes Towards an African Oresteia") in 1970 about his abortive preparations for filming a folk-epic version of the *Oresteia* set in Africa, but he never made the actual film.⁵⁸ His intention was to cast Orestes as a contemporary young student.⁵⁹

Don Orestes, son of Don Agamemnon, is the leading man in the 1988 film, *Fábula de la Bella Palomera* ("The Fable of the Beautiful Pigeon Fancier"), a passionate and fateful love story, made for Spanish-language television, written by world-renowned Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927–2014), directed by Brazilian actor and director Ruy Guerra.

Before the Rain (1994), a Macedonian film in the form of a trilogy by Macedonian filmmaker, writer, and artist Milcho Manchevski (1959–) has been compared to the *Oresteia* because of its theme of the cyclical nature of revenge and violence.⁶⁰ The film begins and ends in a Macedonian village torn by ethnic vendetta. The central scene has the hero, a Pulitzer prize-winning war photographer, in exile in London, about to return to his childhood home in Macedonia. Images of gore both reflect and predict more violence. The film's theme, repeated in words and graffiti is "Time never dies. The circle is not round." The same girl, killed in the first scene, is alive in the last to be pursued again. Another theme "We always kill our own," comes true when the hero is shot by his cousin, as he tries to protect the girl who is the daughter of his old beloved, on the wrong side in this cruel Christian-Muslim conflict.

56 See the chapter on *Electra* in this volume for other cinematic Oresteses: above, pp. 227–31.

57 Macfarlane (2012).

58 The documentary, *Appunti per un' Orestiade Africana*, (along with a printed book) was released on DVD in 2008 curated by R. Chiesi, in the series *Il cinema ritrovato* published by Cineteca di Bologna. For commentary on this work, see Fusillo (1996) 181–242.

59 MacKinnon (1986) 154–6.

60 Elmer (2012).

My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done? (2009) by Werner Herzog (1942–), noted German filmmaker, was inspired by the true story of a matricide. In the movie the murderer is shown rehearsing a scene from a Greek tragedy of revenge.

Finally, an *Orestes*, a Dutch feature film written by Rudolf van den Berg (Dutch filmmaker, 1949–) and David Rudkin (British playwright, 1936–) is scheduled for shooting in Spring 2015, to be directed by van den Berg for Cadenza Films. It is the story of Nowan, who has vowed to avenge his father's death, until he learns that his mother is the murderer.⁶¹

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Orestes*

Two periods of activity in the afterlife of Orestes are busiest: in antiquity after Euripides, among the comic poets and literary critics, in the schools, and with Roman poets; and then in the last half of the 20th and into the 21st century. For the first we rely upon the *scholia*, the text tradition, editors, and commentators, such as West (1987), Willink (1986), Wright (2008), Porter (1994). A useful general source is Enrico Medda's article on *Orestes* (2014). Invaluable as always are Reid (1993), the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (which lists 113 productions). Also see Hall, *et al.* (2004). Orestes has had and continues to have a rich life on the modern stage, thanks to random acts of violence, terrorism all over the world, torture, genocide, oppression, firearms carried in shops, schools, churches, courts, and clinics, vengeance killings, as Orestes and Co. plan to do, just because they can.

The story is not over. Keep an eye out for Orestes on the internet, which has been the best source of material from the 2010s.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

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61 <http://cadenzafilms.com/projects/orestes/#> See also the Director's Note: <http://www.rudolfvandenberg.com/files/Orestes-Director%27sNote%20rev%20Jan%202013.pdf>.

Other Resources

Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama. Classics centre. University of Oxford (directed by E. Hall, O. P. Taplin, and P. Brown). www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk

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Iphigenia in Tauris

Sophie Mills

Whereas a significant number of Euripides' plays have only been fully appreciated in the later 20th century, the trajectory of Iphigenia in Tauris is somewhat reversed, partly due to lengthy and now fortunately subsiding debate about how it fits into the genre of Greek tragedy, and partly because until 1989, Tauris, now the Crimea, was behind the Iron Curtain and out of bounds to westerners. This play was a staple of college productions of the late 19th and early 20th century, and recent years have seen some interesting adaptations, but it is not one of the really popular plays on the recent professional stage. The database of the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD, Oxford University) lists 328 entries under Iphigenia in Tauris, but Medea boasts 971 and Sophocles' Oedipus the King, 895. This relative obscurity contrasts with its acclaim in the ancient world and the 18th century, but whether in its heydays of popularity or in greater obscurity, certain key, and mutually connected, themes in Iphigenia in Tauris have always had significant appeal. Euripides sets his play in the Black Sea, where Iphigenia has been transported after her miraculous escape from sacrifice at her father's hands at Aulis. Now she presides over king Thoas' cult of Artemis, which requires ritual sacrifice of any foreigners unwary enough to land there. At the start of the play, two strangers, who will turn out to be Orestes and Pylades, arrive, intent on stealing Artemis' sacred statue and bringing it back to Greece so that Orestes may be freed from pollution for his matricide. The play's exotic setting, Orestes' and Pylades' friendship, the suspenseful recognition between Orestes and Iphigenia and their exciting escape are typically the themes which have inspired subsequent creative responses. Euripides' play has a largely happy ending, which is faithfully replicated in earlier traditions of reception. However, more recent responses to the play, especially after the Second World War, problematize the possibility that the story can end happily.

In Literature

Iphigenia in Tauris is uniquely situated on the Black Sea coast in the modern Crimea, a region considered wild and violent at least since the 5th-century historian Herodotus' claim (4. 103) that the Taurians practice human sacrifice.

Victorian Britons connected Taurian cruelty with their sufferings in the Crimean War, and many accounts by early travellers in the Crimea characterize its inhabitants as cruel and decadent. Euripides' story of Iphigenia's escape from such a community has therefore had especial resonance at certain times in Europe.¹ By the late 18th century, the identification of the Crimea with the land of the Taurians inspired Catherine the Great to dream of reviving the power of the Byzantine empire under Russian auspices, and she annexed it in 1783, naming it the province of Taurida under Potemkin's government, and identifying him as a latter-day Orestes and herself as Pylades.² The renaming of the Crimea is topical once again: March 2014 saw a proposal in the Russian parliament to rename it Tauris or Taurica.³

The play was first performed in Athens ca. 414 BC. Sophocles' lost play *Chryses* may have offered a sequel to Euripides' story if, as is often thought, its plot lies behind the narrative of the Roman writer Hyginus (ca. 1st AD) *Fabulae* 120–1.⁴ Here, Orestes, Iphigenia and Pylades leave Tauris and go to Sminthe, where they meet Chryses, the priest of Apollo and son of Chryseis by Agamemnon. He captures Orestes and Iphigenia, intending to return them to Thoas, but on learning that they are his half-siblings, he helps Orestes kill Thoas and return to Greece with Artemis' image. Unlike Euripides', this Thoas does not acquiesce in the removal of the image and he is killed, as will be his fate in many later *Iphigenia in Tauris* dramas. Unfortunately the chronological relationship between Euripides' and Sophocles' plays remains unclear.⁵ *Iphigenia in Tauris* was parodied by Aristophanes and may also have won a prize at a revival in 341 BC.⁶ It is also often assumed to have inspired an *Orestes and Pylades* of unknown date by the Greek tragedian Timesitheus and a version by "Polyidus the sophist" (mentioned by Aristotle *Poetics* 1455b2–25), perhaps around 400 BC. In this version, Iphigenia's recognition of her brother was effected very dramatically, as Orestes, on the point of being sacrificed, is saved by mentioning that his sister also was sacrificed. The German composer C. W. Gluck replicates this exciting denouement many centuries later.⁷ Aristotle (*Poetics* 1454a4–9, cf. 1455a16–9) greatly admired the construction of Euripides' plot,

1 Hall (2012) 2, 13, 179–80, 251.

2 Hall (2012) 14–8.

3 <http://eu.greekreporter.com/2014/03/24/russia-to-reinstate-crimea-with-greek-origins/>.

4 Marshall (2002).

5 Marshall (2009) argues that Sophocles' play post-dates Euripides'.

6 Cropp (2000) 62–3.

7 For his opera, *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), see below, pp. 277–8.

and perhaps because of the respect accorded his judgment, the play was popular in Europe in the early modern and enlightenment eras.

Connected with the exile theme is that of the intense bond between two friends in a dangerous world, an idea which captivated the 2nd century BC Roman playwright Pacuvius in a lost tragedy, either *Chryses* or *Doulorestes* ("Orestes The Slave"). In Euripides' play (ll. 578–722), Orestes and Pylades argue over who shall take Iphigenia's letter to Greece and who shall stay to be sacrificed. Pacuvius intensified the dispute in a scene admired by the 1st-century BC Roman writer, philosopher, orator and politician Cicero:⁸ it is the scene where the pair stands before a king, presumably Thoas, who plans to kill Orestes. His plans are foiled as each man claims to be Orestes to save the other from death.⁹ Their intense friendship is central to many later versions of the story.¹⁰ The 2nd century AD writer Lucian takes the next logical step and portrays the pair as lovers, in *Erotes* ("Loves") 47, in which he cites several lines from *Iphigenia in Tauris*.¹¹ Lucian's interpretation also recurs in certain modern responses to Euripides' play.

The Roman poet Ovid (1st century BC–1st century AD), exiled to Tomis in modern-day Romania, engaged with *Iphigenia in Tauris* in *Tristia* ("Sorrows") 4. 4. 59–88 and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* ("Letters from the Black Sea") 3. 2. 39–102, identifying himself with Orestes as a man driven by forces beyond his control to a barbarous land. Ovid assimilates Tomis and Tauris as thoroughly forbidding and hostile places, and foregrounds Orestes' and Pylades' friendship in adversity rather than Orestes' and Iphigenia's relationship. Though he focuses on Euripides' darker elements, rather than his happy ending, he does add some humorous touches to these serious themes.¹² In *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, he also partly anticipates 20th century interpretations that view the story from the Taurians' perspective, by putting the narrative in the mouth of an old Getan man for whom Thoas is a famous king and Euripides' heroine is just "some girl called Iphigenia" (*Epistulae Ex Ponto* 3. 2. 62). The theme of exile, in which a person abroad is identified with one of the play's characters, has had considerable use throughout the centuries, from Ovid to Catherine the Great (18th century) to the English poet and dramatis Robert Browning (19th century), who,

8 *De Amicitia* ("On Friendship") 7. 24; *De Finibus* ("On the Ends of Good and Evil") 2. 79, 5. 63.

9 Hall (2012) 93–5.

10 E.g., Martial 6. 11; Lucian, *Toxaris*; St Augustine, *Confessions* 4. 6; Dante *Purgatorio* 13. 32; Fantham (1991) 270–3.

11 Hall (2012) 108–10.

12 Ingleheart (2010) 237, 240.

in his poem *What's Become of Waring?* imagines his friend Alfred Domett who has emigrated to New Zealand as Iphigenia.

There is some humor even in Euripides,¹³ and we hear of a burlesque version of *Iphigenia in Tauris* by the 4th–3rd century BC Hellenistic writer Rhinthon,¹⁴ while the 2nd century AD play *Charition* (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 413) is an entirely comic variant, notable for its myriad fart jokes. The piece is set in India, as a Greek heroine and her brother escape from barbarians who speak a strange language. As in *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the Greeks prevail over an easily deceived king through the intelligence of Charition, the Iphigenia figure.¹⁵

With the rediscovery of Greek tragedy in the Renaissance and the safe conveyance of *Iphigenia in Tauris* into print in 1503, the opposition between Greeks and Taurian barbarians becomes overlaid with various oppositions between contemporary friend and foe, and especially between Christian and Ottoman. This tendency is already seen in the English politician and writer Charles Davenant's *Circe* (1677), which, though not a version of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, contains a bloodthirsty and cowardly king Thoas, whose daughter's name Osmida establishes an Ottoman connection.¹⁶ The Renaissance Italian poet Giovanni di Bernardo Rucellai's *L'Oreste* ("Orestes," ca. 1520), already shows many tendencies that shape later versions of the *Iphigenia in Tauris* story. It is much longer than Euripides' play, due to Renaissance tastes for amplifying Greek tragedy's short scenes with grand rhetoric; Iphigenia has acquired a maid as confidante; and the motif of Orestes' and Pylades' mutual desire to die for the other is highlighted. Orestes is Christianized, while Thoas is no longer the pliable Euripidean character who accepts Athena's instructions, since Rucellai, anticipating later preferences, removes the *dea ex machina* and portrays Thoas as a savage throughout the play, threatening bloody revenge at its end: in one early scene he plans to throw the Greeks into an amphitheatre, evoking both fears of Ottoman savagery and Roman persecution of Christians.¹⁷

18th-century Iphigenia dramas are inspired by certain elements that all have their origin in Euripides, if only embryonically, such as exoticism of place and characters, human affection, exciting escapes, speculation on the relationship between divine will and human sacrifice (cf. *Iphigenia in Tauris* 389–91),

13 Walton (1987) 149–50.

14 Hall (2012) 76.

15 Hall (2012) 117–21.

16 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 36–41. In Lewis Theobald's *Orestes* (1731), Circe is to marry Thoas, but tries to seduce Orestes. Gliksohn (1985) 156.

17 Di Maria (1996); Hall (2012) 161–5.

and the triumph of reason over violence.¹⁸ Adaptors typically heighten or multiply these elements, sometimes creating pieces which differ wildly from their restrained original.¹⁹ Love interest is absent from Euripides but notable in many Iphigenia plays from an early date. For example, in the French playwright Jean Racine's unfinished drama of ca. 1670, Thoas' son is in love with Iphigenia against his father's wishes. Iphigenia's changing roles are often combined with a shift of emphasis from her relationship with Orestes to his with Pylades, and she is sometimes marginalized or made downright unsympathetic. Equally, however, her role in human sacrifice is often minimized, given authors' general unease with elements in Euripides—Orestes' matricide, the reason for Iphigenia's presence at Tauris and especially, the *dea ex machina*—whose origins are supernatural. Since the idea of human sacrifice to gods is central to the story, authors often keep some references to the divine, but foreground human agency. An exception is the French playwright Jean-Baptiste-Claude Vaubertrand (*Iphigénie en Tauride*, "Iphigenia in Tauris," 1757), who does omit all religious dimensions. His Orestes killed his mother accidentally and Thoas is cynically controlling his subjects with the threat of human sacrifice.²⁰ Dramas of this period often blame Thoas rather than the Taurians for the human sacrifices, following early Enlightenment ideas that the ruler's morals determine those of his people. Sometimes, Thoas is a usurper and the real ruler is restored at the end of the play, along with enlightened morality.²¹ Thoas is often portrayed less favorably than in Euripides, as a stereotype of the kind of king whom revolution would eventually overthrow,²² and as a decidedly picturesque character, is given a larger role than in Euripides.

In this politicized vein is the 18th century English critic and dramatist John Dennis' *Iphigenia* (1700), whose heroes are given some sentiments of British Whigs opposing Jacobite and Catholic tyranny. In contrast to the superstitious and primitive Scythians, his Greeks are noble and staunch anti-tyrants, infusing the play with an exaltation of supposed British values over a continental despotism. Dennis conforms to contemporary preferences for avoiding the supernatural and inclusion of love interest, here in the form of a unique Thoas—a passionate Amazon who is educated out of her wild ways through love. At the play's denouement, Orestes marries her and they sail back to

18 Heitner (1964) 308–9; cf. 289–90.

19 Gliksohn (1985) 155–62, 170–7.

20 Gliksohn (1985) 206.

21 Heitner (1964) 298.

22 Gliksohn (1985) 206–7, 223.

Greece with Pylades and Iphigenia: not only are the Greeks victorious without serious bloodshed, but the Taurians learn civilized ways from their colonists.²³

Plays such as the French dramatists François Joseph de Lagrange-Chancel's *Oreste et Pilade ou Iphigénie en Tauride* ("Orestes and Pylades or Iphigenia in Tauris", 1697) and Claude Guimond de la Touche's *Iphigénie en Tauride* ("Iphigenia in Tauris", 1757) are particularly important in shaping 18th-century traditions of reception.²⁴ Lagrange-Chancel's play contains an intense reunion between the pair after they are separated by a storm at sea. At its climax, Pylades claims that he is Orestes to save his friend from sacrifice, recalling the story admired by Cicero.²⁵ Unlike Euripides', Lagrange-Chancel's savage Iphigenia sacrifices victims herself, and the role of virtuous heroine is given to the non-Euripidean princess Thomiris, the real queen of Tauris, usurped by Thoas, who firmly denies that the gods want blood sacrifice (cf. Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 389–91). Even Thoas is not completely comfortable with such sacrifices, but has instituted them to forestall a prophecy that Orestes will steal Artemis/Diana's image and his power. He is in love with Iphigenia, though supposed to marry Thomiris to ensure the legitimacy of the kingdom. Eventually Thomiris tries to help the Greek trio escape, against Thoas' wishes, and he is killed as he attempts to stop them: his convenient death makes a *dea ex machina* unnecessary.

The Austrian dramatist Joseph Stranitzky's *Tempel Dianae oder der Spiegel* ("Diana's Temple, or The Mirror", 1725?) was influenced by Lagrange-Chancel, but it is full of extremely complex love-entanglements, mistaken identities and new characters. Indicative of its tone is the arrival at its end, not of Athena, but an astrologer to undo all the complications that have arisen from love. Stranitzky's Iphigenia is more sympathetic than Lagrange-Chancel's, arriving at Thoas' kingdom at the beginning of the play, so that her hands are free of bloodshed. Stranitzky does retain certain Euripidean motifs that are important in later reception. In Euripides, Orestes' Fury-induced madness is followed by brief unconsciousness (*Iphigenia in Tauris* 281–315); Stranitzky's Orestes falls asleep and dreams of the Furies, and his sleep or swoon will be important in some later plays or operas.²⁶

23 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 45–53.

24 Heitner (1964) 308–9, Gliksohn (1985) 228–32, Reid (1993) 1: 605–8, and Torrance (2007) 179 all give selected lists of Iphigenia plays. Some are little more than names, but the most significant versions of the story are discussed above.

25 See above, p. 261 and n. 8.

26 Heitner (1964) 293–5.

The German critic and dramatist Johann Elias Schlegel wrote an *Orest und Pylades* ("Orestes and Pylades", 1761, revised from two earlier versions). Schlegel follows de Lagrange-Chancel's emphasis on Pylades' relationship with Orestes, but omits all love interest and Schlegel's Iphigenia only reluctantly performs human sacrifice under orders from Thoas, who is alone in his kingdom in supporting it. Supernatural elements are minimized, but not absent: thus Iphigenia came to Tauris by sea, but the Greeks' eventual escape with the statue is sanctioned by an oracle. In a dramatic climax, Thoas is fatally wounded pursuing the Greeks, but returns to die on stage. They are captured and brought in front of their enemy. Thoas in his dying rage swears that he will kill Orestes, but once more he is confused by the claims of both men to be Orestes. At last, his priest acknowledges the validity of a conveniently discovered oracle that allows them to leave with the divine image and Thoas dies, leaving Tauris to enjoy newly enlightened government.²⁷

Orest und Pylades ("Orestes and Pylades", 1747) by the German poet Christoph Friedrich von Derschau also focuses on the title characters at the expense of Iphigenia who is portrayed as actively willing to kill her brother. A Thomiris appears again, this time as Thoas' daughter engaged to Pylades, who was driven by a storm to Tauris long before Orestes arrives. These Taurians perform no human sacrifices, but Thoas is the brother of Aegisthus and therefore wants to punish his killer Orestes. When Orestes and Pylades again refuse to reveal which of them is really Orestes, Thoas decides to kill them both. When, however, Thomiris is revealed not to be Thoas' daughter but the rightful ruler of Tauris, Orestes kills Thoas, Pylades and Thomiris rule in Tauris and brother and sister return to Greece.²⁸

The other French play mentioned above, which turned out to be influential in shaping 18th-century works of reception, i.e., Claude Guimond de la Touche's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1757) lies behind the more famous versions of the story by Christoph Willibald Gluck and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.²⁹ It removes all love interest and restores Iphigenia to prominence while retaining elements of newer traditions, such as a separate arrival of Orestes and Pylades, Iphigenia as an active sacrificial priestess, the oracle prophesying that the image will be stolen, Pylades' and Orestes' intense friendship, Orestes' sleep and Thoas' death. Instead of a chorus, according to the norms of French tragedy, Iphigenia

27 Heitner (1964) 295–6.

28 Heitner (1964) 297–8.

29 Gliksohn (1985) 236–8 offers a synoptic comparison between the three. On Goethe's and Gluck's versions, see below, pp. 266–7; 277–8.

acquires two confidantes, along with a political subplot concerning the father of one of them, who is Thoas' enemy.³⁰ De la Touche's play may have a political subtext, if, as has been argued, his superstitious and tyrannical Thoas is intended to recall the unpopular Louis XV who committed appalling torture on an attempted assassin just before the play was first performed.³¹ This Iphigenia is opposed to human sacrifice, but she is controlled by Thoas, and the play traces her struggle to reconcile supposed divine command with her belief in benign gods and human reason. De la Touche also makes Orestes especially sympathetic by lessening his crime from matricide to manslaughter under divine compulsion. The recognition scene between the two is effected late in the play, following the version in which Orestes' identity is revealed at the point of sacrifice. Pylades, who had earlier agreed to take Iphigenia's letter to Greece so that he could return with his troops and rescue his fellow Greeks, arrives just in time to save them. The intensity of emotion in this play gave rise to *La Petite Iphigénie* ("Little Iphigenia"), a parody by the 18th century comic writer Charles-Simon Favart. When the noted French librettist Nicolas-François Guillard reworked the play for Gluck's libretto, Favart reworked his parody as *Les Rêveries Renouvelées des Grecs*, ("Greek musings renewed") making even greater mockery of its intense psychological imagery.³²

Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* ("Iphigenia in Tauris," 1779) was performed just one month before Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* and exhibits many features of newer tradition. Both pieces ultimately transcend Euripides to form their own traditions of performance and reception which sometimes, in turn, shape the reception tradition of their Euripidean original.³³ Ovid was already capable of seeing Euripides' story through Taurian eyes, and Goethe extends this perspective. Though the play contains frequent misogynistic platitudes, Iphigenia transcends these as a paradigm of idealized feminine virtue, evoking both Artemis and the Virgin Mary,³⁴ and her influence on Thoas is especially benign, since his love for her has persuaded him to end human sacrifice in Tauris. But when she refuses to marry him because of her cursed family background, he tries to force her to do so by reinstituting the sacrifices, starting with the two newly-arrived Greek strangers. When Orestes confesses his matricide to Iphigenia, she reveals her identity to him and prays, successfully, to Apollo and Artemis to release him from torment by the Furies. Orestes is in Tauris by Apollo's

30 Ewans (2007) 37–8; Heitner (1964) 299–300.

31 Hughes (2007) 108–11.

32 Hall (2012) 200–1; Gliksohn (1985) 189–93.

33 For example in Barall (2010).

34 Torrance (2007).

command that he must rescue his sister. Initially, he interprets this as Apollo's sister and thus her statue, as in Euripides. Before Orestes realizes that he must rescue his own sister, Pylades wants to enact Euripides' original plot by deceiving Thoas, whom he despises, stealing the statue and escaping. But Iphigenia transcends Euripidean tradition by refusing to deceive Thoas, whom she regards as a second father. Through her persuasive words and honesty and Orestes' reinterpretation of Apollo's oracle, the Greeks leave Thoas' statue and he gives them his blessing. Goethe emphasizes human reason in solving problems and critiques the original myth: the gods do not want human sacrifice, nor do they need Orestes to be tormented by the Furies of the dead.

Goethe's play was immediately popular, translated into English in 1793 and many other languages thereafter.³⁵ Iphigenia's characterization was immensely admired and the play's reconciliatory ending seemed to be a great improvement on the violence or deception of earlier versions. It was also a landmark in German literature.³⁶ But already in the 1920s, some critics derided what they saw as mere bourgeois idealism, and more recent critiques argue that the play replicates, if more subtly, the assertion of Greek superiority over barbarians that shapes the end of Euripides' play. Thoas voices the view of those who criticize European exploitation of the earth—"The Greeks have often cast their greedy eyes/ On far-off treasures of barbarians,/ The golden fleece, fine horses, lovely daughters" (v. 2. 102–3)³⁷—but the story still ends essentially on the Greeks' terms, not his. Significantly, it was admired both by Lazarus Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto and the theatre-loving Nazis, for whom Goethe's Iphigenia represented the noble Greek kin of the Germans.³⁸ Their ambivalent supporter Gerhard Hauptmann wrote an *Iphigenie in Delphi* (1940), inspired by Goethe's planned sequel to his play.³⁹ Here, in a variant of Hyginus, *Fabulae* 122, Electra is at Delphi waiting for Orestes, but wrongly believes that he and Pylades were killed by Iphigenia and almost kills her when she arrives. Hauptmann's Iphigenia ultimately kills herself, enabling her family to leave their past behind; she is not Goethe's sympathetic figure, however, but rather a terrifying embodiment of Artemis' darker incarnation as the chthonic goddess Hecate. Though written first, Hauptmann's play became the last part

35 Hall (2012) 208–10.

36 Seidlin (1939); Wagner (1995) 7–16.

37 Passage (1980) 477.

38 Hall (2012) 213.

39 Another branch of post-Taurian tradition which had been imagined in earlier German plays, and also by Gurney (1855) and Garnett (1890): Hall (2012) 216, n. 19.

of a tetralogy first performed in 1947,⁴⁰ and while it is not explicitly anti-Nazi, the plot of its first play, *Iphigenie in Aulis* (1943) is suggestive: here, a nation is at the mercy of gods whose will is interpreted by a power-crazed priest and a spineless Agamemnon, who sacrifices his daughter; she is miraculously saved, but becomes the destructive figure of *Iphigenie in Delphi*. The struggle between Apollo and Hecate, light and darkness, is central to Hauptmann's tetralogy: light will ultimately win, but only through the self-sacrifice of Iphigenia at the end of *Iphigenie in Delphi*.⁴¹

Two post-war German writers, Ilse Langner in *Iphigenie Smith Kehrt Heim* ("Iphigenia Smith Goes Home," 1948) and Egon Fritz in *Iphigenie in Amerika* ("Iphigenia in America," 1948) both view *Iphigenia in Tauris* through Goethe in the context of post-war Germany, where Mycenae represents Nazi Germany and Iphigenia's place of exile, the US.⁴² German culture has had a complex relationship with the *Iphigenia in Tauris* story, given the gap between Goethe's idealism and National Socialism.⁴³ The horrors of Nazism created questions of the true nature (and nationality) of barbarians, and in 1962, Erwin Piscator directed the Berlin Freie Volksbühne in a production of Hauptmann's tetralogy which explicitly invoked Nazi Germany.⁴⁴ In the turmoil of the 1960s, Goethe's classic was especially vulnerable. A year after a famous lecture in 1967 by Theodor Adorno which problematized the apparent humanism of the play,⁴⁵ the German film-maker Rainer Werner Fassbinder's play *Iphigenie auf Tauris von Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* ("Iphigenia in Tauris by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe") replaced Goethe's plot with a series of chaotic monologues by his characters. The monologues are studded with quotes from political trials, Mao's "Red Book" and contemporary pop songs as they explore issues of power and social control. His Thoas is not Goethe's noble savage and Pylades and Orestes, provocatively for the time, are an openly gay couple.⁴⁶

40 *Iphigenie in Aulis, Agamenons Tod* ("Agamemnon's Death"), *Elektra* and *Iphigenie in Delphi*: Garten (1954) 47–50.

41 Ziolkowski (1959) 112; Hermann (2005) 27–53; Hall (2012) 216–8.

42 Marshall (1994).

43 Wagner (1995) 79–84.

44 Hall (2012) 219, 226. Among the adaptations echoing the horrors of Nazism, mention should be reserved for the American playwright Emery George's *Iphigenia in Auschwitz* (2001), the third play in a trilogy in which Iphigenia lives through the Second World War. She meets her brother at Auschwitz, where her priestly duties have been transformed into service as a shower attendant in the death camp, and their only escape proves to be suicide.

45 Adorno (1992); Hohendahl (2011); Hall (2012) 223–4.

46 Barnett (2005) 85–91.

Goethe's play has also been used to explore the implications of German reunification. In 1991, the German director and playwright Alexander Lang subverted Goethe's noble ending, by having Orestes steal Artemis' statue from Taurians distracted by a shiny new Walkman proffered by Pylades, thereby condemning West Germany for preying upon the material desires of the East and the East for those desires.⁴⁷ In *Iphigenie in Freiheit* ("Iphigenia in Freedom", 1992) by the East German writer Volker Braun, Iphigenia, marooned on a dystopian island, cannot adjust to her new circumstances, reflecting Braun's own dissatisfaction with the new Germany.⁴⁸ Goethe has also been connected with Apartheid's legacy in South Africa: in an interesting reversion to older idealizations, his reconciliatory Iphigenia is compared with Nelson Mandela.⁴⁹

Goethe's ending, in which Artemis' statue stays in Tauris, marks an important shift in the trajectory of the Iphigenia plot. In a founding text of Mexican literature Alfonso Reyes' dramatic poem *Ifigenia Cruel* ("Cruel Iphigenia", 1924) goes even further as Iphigenia rejects her irrevocably cursed homeland and chooses instead to remain with her community in Tauris as a (still sacrificial) priestess.⁵⁰ Reyes explores the colonization of the New World through his portrayal of the disruption of a peaceful older civilization by a younger one, the Greeks by implication representing the conquistadors.

Iphigenia in Tauris is about reconnection with community, so it is not surprising that several of its darker adaptations are monologues by individual characters trapped in their solitary memories. In the classically-educated Crimean poet Lesya Ukrainka's "dramatic scene" *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1903), Iphigenia is a resistant Ukrainian nationalist struggling against her captors. The wintry weather of the area is invoked as echoing a coldness in her soul intensified by her sufferings and Ukrainka offers her no escape from her troubles.⁵¹ The American writer Randall Jarrell's *Orestes at Tauris* (1948) is a long monologue addressing Orestes in a vividly-imagined portrayal of his sufferings, ending with his death at Iphigenia's hands in an implied reference to the horrors of the Second World War.⁵² In *The Return of Iphigenia* (1993), the left-wing activist and Greek poet Yannis Ritsos links his unhappy life and family history with Iphigenia's: the medical and prison bureaucrats who damaged his

47 McKnight (1995) 199.

48 Haas (2003) 128; Hermann (2005) 93–120.

49 Von Wietersheim/Farrelly (2001) 25–7; 41–6.

50 Hall (2012) 275–81; Barrenechea (2012).

51 Hall (2012) 258–63.

52 Jarrell (1948).

own life are assigned the role of the barbarians in the poem, and his Iphigenia and Orestes find no happy ending when they finally return home.⁵³

Few novels have directly narrated the story of *Iphigenia at Tauris*, but the Hungarian Imre Kertész's novella, *A Nyomkereső* (1977), translated as *The Path-seeker* (2008) follows the return of an unnamed commissioner to a concentration camp with which he was somehow once involved, in a menacing and mysterious narrative. The setting is Weimar, near Buchenwald, never named but identified by the slogan *jedem das Seine* ("to each what he deserves") over its gate. Weimar was Goethe's home and important for Nazi Germany, and the commissioner's wife has been reading *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, expressing her admiration for its uplifting ending. For the commissioner, Goethe's vision is "tawdry romanticism": he points out that Iphigenia is in Tauris because "Daddy" sacrificed her and claims that in reality Thoas' troops slaughtered Pylades and Orestes: soon after, he experiences a temporary mental breakdown in which he views the passers-by as Furies. *Ifigenia* by the Swedish author and professor of literature Sven Delblanc (1990) casts a similarly dark shadow on the play. The first half of the novel recounts the events of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, minus her miraculous rescue, but its second half focuses on the poet Demodocus and how he was forced by those in power to create the more optimistic version of the story to hide the truth of what really happened.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

There are more illustrations of *Iphigenia in Tauris* in 4th-century Greek vase painting than of any other tragedy and the theme is popular on sarcophagi and wall-painting.⁵⁴ While it is not always clear whether the vases represent specific scenes from the play⁵⁵ or recall its themes more generally,⁵⁶ certain parts of the story, such as Iphigenia's reunion with her brother, his close call with the sacrificial knife and their successful escape were highly meaningful

53 Ritsos (1993); Hall (2012) 281–3. The script of *The Come Back* performed in Sydney in 2007 and 2014 by the Teleia Company is based on *The Return of Iphigenia* and on Ritsos' *Orestis* (1966).

54 Kahil (1990) and Linant de Bellefonds (1990) discuss *Iphigenia in Tauris* in Greek and Roman art respectively.

55 Philippart (1925) 10–2; Trendall/Webster (1971) 92–4.

56 Cambitoglou (1975); Kahil (1990) 718.

in the 4th century and beyond. Many vases portray Iphigenia as priestess of a sanctuary of Artemis interacting with Pylades and her brother,⁵⁷ and understandably popular is the moment just before Orestes recognizes Iphigenia after she has recited her letter.⁵⁸ Such a suspenseful scene is perfectly balanced between fear and resolution.⁵⁹ On a composite scene on an Athenian vase of ca. 400 BC, Artemis, Iphigenia and a temple assistant are in the upper register with Pylades, Orestes and Thoas and an attendant below; Iphigenia is handing a letter to Pylades. Here, Thoas is in oriental dress, and some vases emphasize the foreign ethnicity of Tauris.⁶⁰ On an exciting representation on a Campanian neck amphora of 330–320 BC in Leningrad,⁶¹ Iphigenia carrying the goddess' image escapes with Pylades and Orestes, while a severed head running with blood is painted above the leading youth. It is certainly tempting to see the emphasis on dangers to Greeks evoked by these vases as especially meaningful to immigrant Greeks in southern Italy, while the cult of Artemis—central to Euripides' plot—seems also to have had particular currency in 4th century southern Italy, so may also have influenced the popularity of these images.⁶²

The story of the play is also appropriate for those in the tomb because of its optimistic ending,⁶³ and the myth appears on Roman sarcophagi, mostly dating from the mid-2nd century AD. They typically bear a cartoon-like set of stories in various combinations of scenes and characters.⁶⁴ The imprisonment of the Greek men, Iphigenia as priestess, and the escape are especial favorites. Sometimes the recognition through the letter appears, and they often include earlier scenes from Orestes' life, such as his matricide. A fine sarcophagus now in the Munich Glyptothek⁶⁵ bears an impressively complete version: Iphigenia tends Artemis' statue as the captive Greeks are presented to her by a Scythian archer; Orestes is harassed by a Fury with Pylades at his side; then Iphigenia carries the statue while one of the Greeks attacks two Scythians and

57 For example, Kahil (1990) 713 (fig. 18: 370–60 BC); see also Philippart (1925) 12–3; Hall (2012) 72.

58 Kahil (1990) 713 (figg. 19–26).

59 Hall (2012) 74–5.

60 Thus in fig. 27 (Kahil [1990] 713) Artemis' statue is clad in Phrygian costume, and in fig. 21, ca. 350, (Kahil [1990] 719) Artemis wears an animal skin and rides on a panther-drawn chariot.

61 Kahil (1990) 713 (fig. 29).

62 Hall (2012) 84–91.

63 Hall (2012) 79–82.

64 Linant de Bellefonds (1990) 728 (figg. 56, 75–6, 81–84; 57, 68, 77–80).

65 Linant de Bellefonds (1990) 728 (fig. 75).

finally she moves to the ship, holding one man's hand and protected by the other. We move psychologically from danger to safety, and embarkation on a boat may foreshadow the journey on Charon's boat that the inhabitant of the sarcophagus will make. This sarcophagus is also featured in a painting by the German artist Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein (1751–1828) entitled *Goethe in the Campagna, 1786–87*, in which the poet, who completed *Iphigenie auf Tauris* when the pair was travelling in Italy, is portrayed in an Italian landscape with ruins including the sarcophagus.⁶⁶

The flight of the fugitives seems to be especially popular in provincial art⁶⁷ and sarcophagi and objects illustrating the *Iphigenia in Tauris* theme are widely distributed in Europe.⁶⁸ A cylindrical sculpture from Sussex portrays an encounter between Thoas and Orestes and Pylades, which resembles a well-known wall-painting on the House of the Citharist at Pompeii.⁶⁹ A small silver relief cup dating from between 25 BC and 25 AD⁷⁰ has some relationship to Hyginus' story (*Fabula* 121) which may recall the plays of Sophocles' and Pacuvius discussed earlier. Here, Orestes, Pylades and Iphigenia, holding a statue, are apparently in the sanctuary of Apollo Smintheus, while Thoas has come after them with a bodyguard. Between the two sets of people stands Chryseis and a priest, perhaps Chryses, about to hand over his half-siblings to Thoas and a warrior. Ceramics from Arezzo in Italy show the same scene.⁷¹

The play also inspired wall-paintings at Ephesus (in present-day Turkey) and especially at Pompeii and Herculaneum (Italy), where eleven examples are known. Two reasons suggest themselves for this popularity: the resonance of Orestes' and Pylades' friendship, and the 1st century BC emperor Augustus' interest in the cult of Diana at Aricia which by the roughly contemporary Greek geographer Strabo's day was believed to have been founded by Orestes.⁷² Especially popular are scenes of the captured pair brought before Thoas and Iphigenia or just Iphigenia. In the most famous example, in the House of the Citharist, the pair stand before a sitting Thoas with hands bound, while Iphigenia has a commanding standing position. Orestes' eyes are down-cast, contrasting with Pylades' bolder stare.⁷³ The youths are heroically nude,

66 Hall (2012) 206.

67 Linant de Bellefonds (1990) 728 (figg. 69–73).

68 Hall (2012) 150–7.

69 Black *et al.* (2012).

70 Linant de Bellefonds (1990) 728 (fig. 87).

71 Stenico (1966) 29–31.

72 Hall (2012) 100. For a different account of the local cult of Diana at Aricia, see also below, p. 482.

73 Fantham (1992) 273–5; Philippart (1925) 5–33.

handsome and powerful yet also vulnerable. The Roman writer, naturalist and philosopher Pliny (*Natural History* 35. 136, 1st century AD) mentions a famous picture of Orestes and Iphigenia by Timomachus of Byzantium in the 1st century BC who specialized in painting emotional scenes from drama. But Timomachus' connection with these paintings is purely conjectural. They clearly represent a story connected with Euripides' play, but perhaps *via* a scene from Pacuvius, given that there is no exactly equivalent scene in Euripides.

The story is represented in 18th and 19th century European painting and drawing, focusing on similar key scenes to the ancient artistic examples. The Dutch painter Pieter Lastman's *The Dispute between Orestes and Pylades* (1614), now in the Rijksmuseum, is an intricate painting incorporating many details derived from Lastman's studies of classical literature and art.⁷⁴ It is full of color and sensual details and to the left of a smoking altar the pair is involved in an intense disagreement; around them are fearsome, turban-clad Taurians and severed heads on poles. His countryman Nicolaas Verkolje (1732) painted Orestes and Pylades kneeling imploringly before Iphigenia at the altar (fig. 1), an image possibly inspired by Lagrange-Chancel's play, which was translated into Dutch just three years earlier.⁷⁵ In the Swiss-Austrian artist Angelika Kauffman's painting of Orestes and Iphigenia at Tauris (1771), an unusually vulnerable Iphigenia swoons before a statue of Artemis.⁷⁶ Kauffman also drew Orestes seated between Pylades, whose hand he grasps, and Iphigenia at whom he gazes, capturing the moment just before Iphigenia heals him from his guilt in Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. The drawing (1803) was published as a frontispiece to the first collected edition of her friend Goethe's writings.⁷⁷ Two famous pictures, by the German painter Anselm Feuerbach (1862)⁷⁸ and the Russian artist Valentin Serov (1893),⁷⁹ focus purely on Iphigenia, representing

74 http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Lastman_-_De_offerstrijd_tussen_Orestes_en_Pylades_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg.

75 http://amasp.adlibhosting.com/wwwopacx_images/wwwopac.ashx?command=getcontent&server=images&value=s_sa_28673_001.jpg. A version of the same scene was also painted by the Anglo-American Benjamin West in *Pylades and Orestes brought as Victims before Iphigenia* (1766): <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/west-pylades-and-orestes-brought-as-victims-before-iphigenia-n00126>. It was inspired by Gilbert West's translation of *Iphigenia in Tauris*: Hall/Macintosh (2005) 46.

76 Maierhofer (2012) 8–11.

77 http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goethe_Iphigenia_in_Tauris_1803.jpg.

78 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Feuerbach_Iphigenie1.jpg.

79 <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/valentin-serov/iphigenia-i-tauris-1893>.



FIGURE 1 Nicolaas Verkolje, *Orestes and Pylades before Iphigenia* (1732), oil on panel, 60 × 79 cm, © Amsterdam Museum.

her as a lonely figure, far from home, gazing at the sea with rough, dark cliffs framing the scene.⁸⁰

In the 20th century a mention should be reserved for Jean Bellette's *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1944), which translates a somewhat similar scene to an Australian landscape: her Iphigenia is naked and isolated amid several groupings of women and men on horseback.⁸¹

Completely different from all these is the unique representation of the myth offered by the contemporary American artist Oscar Magnan. In the foreground of his painting *Iphigenia in Tauris* (2004), a naked Iphigenia with long, flowing hair stretches backward, gazing at a statue of the many-breasted Artemis attached to a rocky island behind her (fig. 2).⁸²

80 As for other forms of figurative arts I should mention a bronze sculpture of Orestes and Pylades underneath a bust of Diana by the German sculptor Carl Johann Steinhauser (1884) which adorns a fountain in Fairmount Park in Philadelphia: see Hall (2012) 92.

81 Hall (2012) 285–6.

82 <http://www.oscarmagnan.com/Iphigeniaintauris.html>.

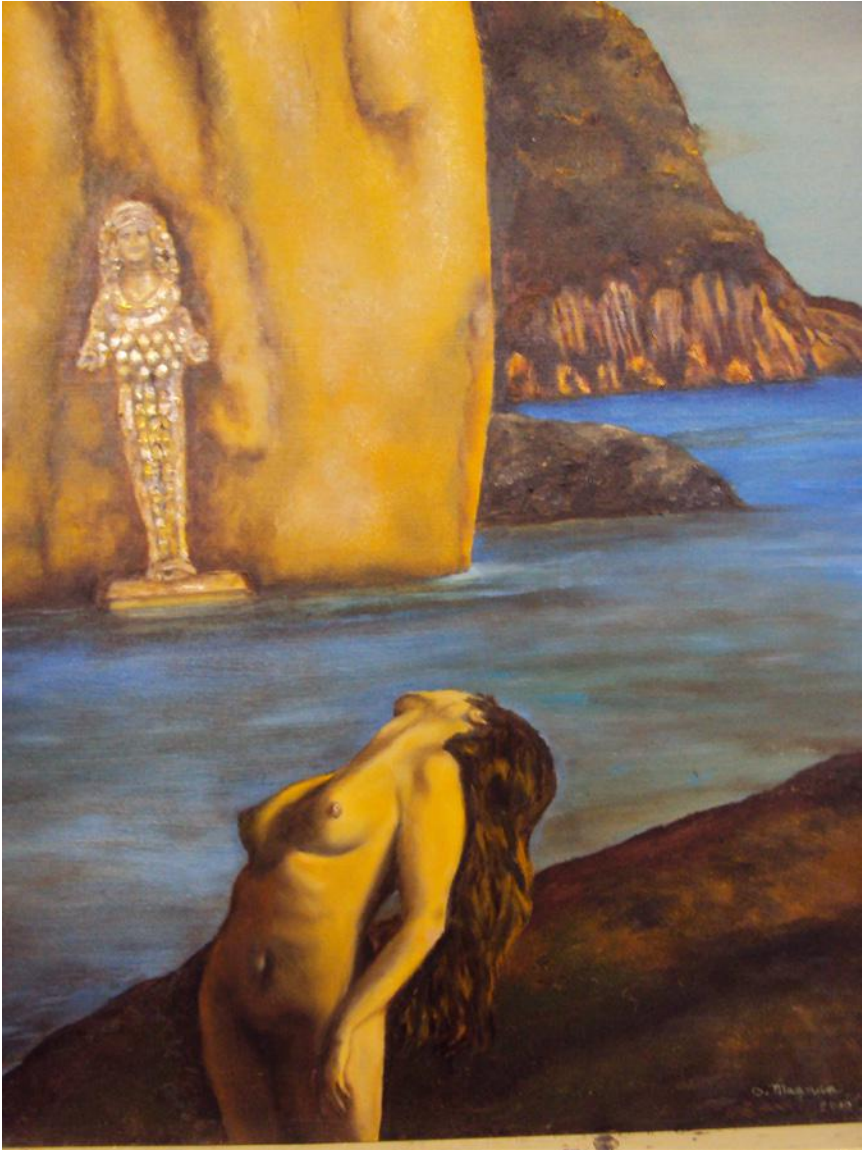


FIGURE 2 Oscar Magnan, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 8" × 10", undated, oil on board, © Oscar Magnan.

Music

In 1678 the Italian composer Antonio Draghi produced music for a libretto written by Nicolò Minato and a ballet by Johannes Schmelzer called *Il Tempio de Diana in Taurica* ("The Temple of Diana in Taurica") and this marks the beginning of the extraordinary popularity of *Iphigenia in Tauris* on

18th-century European operatic stages. Though the story of Iphigenia at Aulis was even more popular, many *Iphigenia in Tauris* operas, ballets and other musical pieces were written in the span of little more than a century.⁸³ Like the playwrights discussed above, 18th century composers freely add to Euripides' story, with the added advantage of musical enhancements. Thus the Italian composer Tommaso Traetta's *Ifigenia in Tauride* ("Iphigenia in Tauris," 1763) includes picturesque musical elements such as a storm and a dance of the Furies, which influenced Gluck's more famous version.⁸⁴ Especially notable in many operas is the portrayal of foreigners with "barbarian", or actually Turkish music, one example being the arias given to Toante (Thoas) in George Friedrich Händel's *Oreste* (1734).⁸⁵

The libretto of the 18th century Italian librettist Mattia Verazi, loosely based on de Lagrange-Chancel, was used by several contemporary Italian composers of *Iphigenia in Tauris* operas,⁸⁶ and is notable for its emphasis on spectacle, in the form of Merodate the king of Sarmatia, who arrives with a huge procession of Moors, giants, and beasts which later threaten Orestes in a gladiatorial combat. Love interest is also prominent: Merodate is in Tauria to marry princess Tomiri (Thomiris) who has been usurped by Toante (Thoas) but Tomiri loves Toante who loves Iphigenia. Toante is the paranoid king of earlier tradition who fears an oracle that his power will be taken when the statue of Diana is taken. Both Orestes and Iphigenia are detached from their traditional crimes: Iphigenia has performed no sacrifices, while Orestes killed his mother accidentally when he was dispatching Aegisthus. After various plot twists, Toante tries to force Iphigenia into marrying him by threatening to kill Orestes if she does not. She agrees but adds that she plans to kill herself. Tomiri helps the pair escape via a secret passage and demands that Toante marry her, but he hurls himself to death as Diana's temple burns down.⁸⁷

83 Euripides' play inspired an extraordinary number of operas, although many are now quite obscure. Perusal of Reid (1993) 1: 605–8, Torrance (2007) 179, Cumming (1995), Glicksohn (1985) 228–32 and the database of the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama yields citations of some 20 Iphigenia operas in Italy alone in the 18th century, and the *Iphigenia in Tauris* theme retained considerable popularity across Europe well into the 19th century.

84 Hall (2012) 194–5; M. McClymonds, *Ifigenia in Tauride* (i), *Grove Music Online*. An experimental version of Traetta's opera was recently performed at the Baroque Festival at Schwetzingen: Molke (2013).

85 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 563. The opera was performed in 2000 at the Royal Opera House.

86 *Ifigenia in Tauride* by Gian Francesco de Majò (1764), *Oreste* by Carlo Monza (1766) and *Ifigenia in Tauride* by Niccolò Jommelli (1771).

87 Heitner (1964) 302–4; Ewans (2007) 37–8.

Claude Guimond de la Touche's play was the source for Nicolas-François Guillard's libretto for Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779), but when Gluck discovered that Guillard, following his source and in contrast to Marco Coltellini's libretto for Traetta, had kept the Furies as imaginary beings, he insisted that Guillard incorporate visible ones.⁸⁸ The drama opens with a storm which separates Orestes and Pylades, and a barbarous and superstitious Thoas, forewarned by the oracle that strangers will deprive him of his power, appears early on. The Taurians are also portrayed as bloodthirsty supporters of human sacrifice, and their eventual humbling will be joyously greeted by the Greeks:

Let us wipe out the last remnants/Of this hateful race,
 Let us carry out heaven's vengeance!
 And purify this region/In the names of Pylades and Orestes!⁸⁹

Iphigenia is active in human sacrifice, but her innate purity leaves her essentially uncorrupted, while Orestes feels acute guilt at his matricide, and wishes to be punished in Hell, somewhat inconsistently with the Greek background.⁹⁰

Iphigénie en Tauride is Gluck's masterpiece in the judgment of his contemporaries and posterity, and greatly outshone the contemporary version by his rival Italian composer Niccolò Piccinni (1728–1800).⁹¹ One traditional purpose of ancient tragedians was the education of their cities, and some composers who considered their environment unfavorable to their work and ideals were inspired by this vision.⁹² In this spirit, Gluck rejected the conventions of earlier baroque opera with its excess of vocal display, favoring instead clean, melodic lines in a plot recalling the simpler forms of Greek tragedy. Through his studies of Greek choruses, he integrated the chorus skillfully into this opera, characterizing his Scythians, Greeks and Furies through music.⁹³ Gluck blends elements to a greater or lesser degree visible in Euripides—a chorus, Furies, the family curse, Orestes' relationship with his sister and rough Taurians—with elements from later tradition, such as the storm, Thoas' early entry and interest in Iphigenia, and Orestes' and Pylades' relationship. The traumatic history

88 Ewans (2007) 40. For general accounts of Gluck's opera, see Cumming (1995); Philipppo (2005) 93–103; Ewans (2007) 31–53.

89 Guillard/Gluck (2000) 39–40.

90 Ewans (2007) 39–41.

91 Rushton (1972) compares the two.

92 Ewans (2007) 1.

93 Ewans (2007) 39–49; Cumming (1995) 227–36.

of the house of Atreus is always near. Early in the play, Iphigenia dreams that her mother incites her to kill her brother, while in Orestes' famous mad scene, he sees a vision of Clytemnestra among the Furies and mistakes Iphigenia for his mother. Traetta has a similar effect.⁹⁴ The recognition scene is especially admired, since Gluck delays it suspensefully until Orestes is on the point of being sacrificed.⁹⁵ The opera ends soon after Orestes is recognized, as Pylades kills Thoas, and Diana (not, as in Euripides, Athena) appears, condemning human sacrifice and absolving Orestes. The excellence of this opera lies in its music's expression of memories of loss and guilt and Gluck's "shabby, distressed, and emotionally accessible"⁹⁶ heroes in fact recall Euripides' own tendency to characterize his heroes as vulnerable and flawed human beings. The recording of Maria Callas' Italian version at La Scala (Milan) of 1957 is still a bestseller, partly because Iphigenia's famous aria, "O sventurata Ifigenia" ("O unhappy Iphigenia", an Italian translation of the original "O malheureuse Iphigénie") recalls her separation from her family and country.⁹⁷

Gluck's opera still enthralls audiences. The highly acclaimed version by the Canadian Opera Company (2011) directed by Robert Carsen offered a particularly effective mixture of staging, singing and orchestration. The characters were essentially trapped in a black, blood-covered box until the end, when the walls lifted and light finally shone through. Lighting was used to particularly good effect, sometimes casting the characters' shadows thirty feet tall, or enabling the priestesses to become "multiple images of Clytemnestra, haunting Orestes, literally driving him up the wall of the set [while] men morph from dead bodies to slithering Furies driving the matricide into a corner."⁹⁸

The Australian composer Helen Gifford's *Exile* (2010) for percussion, soprano and chorus with a mandolin and wind instruments, is conceived as a creative rediscovery of ancient Greek music in which Iphigenia reflects on her memories and experiences. It is also the world's first iPad Opera, using an iPad application to combine music, lyrics and graphics.⁹⁹ The visual imagery for the application comes from a performance in June 2010, in Melbourne, which

94 Ewans (2007) 49.

95 Hall (2012) 187–8; Munteanu (2013).

96 Hall (2012) 194.

97 Reynolds (2005); Hall (2012) 184. A DVD of Gluck's Taurian and Aulian Iphigenia operas conducted by Marc Minkowski and directed by Pierre Audi has recently (2001) been produced: Altena (2013).

98 Kaplan (2011). On a rather different note, a musical version of *Iphigenia in Tauris* at Penn State Hazleton in 1998, conceptualized Thoas as a cult leader who ended the play by giving cyanide to his female followers: see Hall (2012) 271.

99 <http://aphids.net/projects/Exile>.

used the desolate and dangerous Point Nepean as Tauris. There is a relationship between this landscape “woven with paranoia and isolation”, and the themes of longing, claustrophobia and isolation in Gifford’s opera.¹⁰⁰ Gifford also distrusts Euripides’ light-hearted ending, stating: “Iphigenia walks on, or into, the ocean at the opera’s conclusion. Whereas the poor soul fantasises walking with Orestes over the water, she is really [...] walking under it”.¹⁰¹ For this Iphigenia, no *dea ex machina* will come.

Dance

Lucian (2nd century AD) suggests that there were ancient pantomimes about Iphigenia (*On Dancing* 43), and *Iphigenia in Tauris* ballets matched the flood of operas in the 18th century,¹⁰² but Gluck’s *Iphigénie en Tauride* was a particular inspiration to the well-known American dancer Isadora Duncan (1877–1927). Duncan was also influenced by contemporary conceptions of Greece as the motherland of civilization in a pure and primitive form, and created a composite dance drama on the Iphigenia story, joining a majestic Euripidean Iphigenia with a spectacularly dancing group of Scythians and a Bacchic dance of maidens.¹⁰³ In 2007 and 2008, a festival of music and dance in Duncan’s spirit, entitled *Terpsichore in Tauris* was held at the ancient theatre at Sevastopol.¹⁰⁴ The German choreographer and dancer Pina Bausch (1940–2009) as director of the Tanztheater at Wuppertal explored the themes of memory and Orestes’ and Pylades’ passionate friendship in a spectacular and emotionally intense choreographed version of Gluck’s opera in 1974.¹⁰⁵ Her version is still performed, most recently (2014) in Hong Kong, and may now be better known among the general public than the Euripidean original.¹⁰⁶

100 Quote from Thea Baumann, Executive Producer of Exile, cited by Lorenzon (2010).

101 Helen Gifford, quoted in Lorenzon (2010).

102 E.g., Jean Favier, *Ifigenia in Tauride* (“Iphigenia in Tauris,” 1775: *APGRD* 10737); Favier, *Il riconoscimento di Oreste e d’Ifigenia* (“The recognition of Orestes and Iphigenia,” 1776: *APGRD* 11048); F. Clerico, *I sacrifici di Tauride* (“The sacrifices in Tauris,” 1789: *APGRD* 10985); U. Garzia, *Ifigenia in Tauride* (“Iphigenia in Tauris,” 1798: *APGRD* 10681). On Jean-Georges Noverre’s choreography with music by Franz Aspelmayr (1772–1773), see Gliksohn (1985) 187–9.

103 Hall (2012) 201–2. Jowitt (1985–1986) offers an excellent impression of Duncan’s dancing style and her conception of Greek-ness.

104 See www.heptachor.ru/Festivals.

105 Orestes’ and Pylades’ dance may be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57WsJ3cTPMc>.

106 Its intensity is not to every reviewer’s taste: Brown (2010). For a more positive account, see Sulcas (2010).

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Iphigenia in Tauris has been performed all over the world, from Libya in 1938¹⁰⁷ to Syracuse (Italy) in its ancient theatre with a 30-foot high altar hung with skulls (1933).¹⁰⁸ It has been performed by German refugees after their internment in the Isle of Man between 1940 and 1942¹⁰⁹ and on the radio: the earliest BBC broadcast of a Greek tragedy may have been *Iphigenia in Tauris*, broadcast in 1925 with Flora Robson, Tyrone Guthrie and Robert Donat.¹¹⁰ But Euripides' virtuous and intelligent Iphigenia, the play's uplifting ending, and its female chorus, made it especially attractive for university productions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially by women's colleges. Gilbert Murray's highly influential translation (1910) received especial prominence via a spectacular production by the famous English man of the theatre Granville Barker in 1912. It was blessed by its stunningly beautiful Iphigenia, Lillah McCarthy, and the production triumphed in the US in 1915.¹¹¹ This production confounded traditional notions of Greek tragedy, being full of color, sinuous dancing by a well-integrated and prominent chorus, and multicultural elements. Red and black were the main colors of the set and lighting while a blood-stained altar dominated the action. Iphigenia wore a blood-stained costume evoking an Athenian *kore* and exotic priestly regalia. Contemporary reviews focused especially on these visual aspects, and the slightly comic tone of some of them suggests some discomfort with the experience: "there is simply no describing [Thoas'] soldiers with their union suits of black and white adorned with whisk-brooms of the hue of tomato bisque... [and]... Thoas himself with his ornithological scepter, his checkered robe, and his scarlet beard."¹¹²

After this milestone production, the lull in subsequent professional productions is striking, but the pace picks up in the 1970s. A popular trend in recent reception is the incorporation of *Iphigenia in Tauris* with plays handling earlier parts of her family's complex saga. This general trend may reflect a contemporary need to present *Iphigenia in Tauris* with additional background for theatre-goers unfamiliar with Greek myth. Thus *The Wedding of Iphigenia* and

107 APGRD 1856.

108 Walton (1987) 321–2, 326.

109 AGPRD 5957.

110 APGRD 5279, on which see Wrigley (2005) 219.

111 Hall (2012) 239–51; Slater (2010–2011) includes pictures.

112 Quoted by Hartigan (1995) 19.

Iphigeneia in Concert, by American playwrights Gretchen Cryer and Doug Dyer (1971), combined the two Iphigenia plays in a rock musical and boasted twelve Iphigenias to indicate the brokenness of her life.¹¹³

The most ambitious attempt to contextualize *Iphigenia in Tauris* through other tragedies is the English director John Barton's mammoth *The Greeks* (1980), first performed at the Aldwych Theatre in London, which combines ten tragedies spanning the whole story of the house of Atreus, ending with *Iphigenia in Tauris*,¹¹⁴ while in the American dramatist and translator Kenneth Cavander's *Agamemnon and His Daughters* (1994)¹¹⁵ Euripides' Iphigenia plays are combined with material derived from other tragedies concerning her father Agamemnon. More recently, *Swallow Song* (2004, 2006), a play combining ancient text, song and dance, was created in a collaboration between the Greek actress Lydia Koniordou, the British professor of Classics Oliver Taplin, and others. The play incorporates lines from *Iphigenia in Tauris* and multiple other pieces of ancient Greek literature from tragedy to lyric to epic, with music and contemporary photographs, to explore the horror caused by war, especially in children's experiences.¹¹⁶

Understandably popular on the modern stage is a double bill of both Iphigenia plays. Lithuanian-American writer and director JoAnne Akalaitis' *Iphigenia Cycle* (1997) focused on Iphigenia's political and social experiences as female. It also continued the tradition of exotic setting inherent in Euripides, and visually explicit in Granville Barker's production by consciously juxtaposing ancient elements, such as a prominent chorus, with contemporary images intended to strengthen the emotion generated by the words of the text and to set Iphigenia's experiences in the context of bigger social structures. The Iphigenia of the first play is a confident teenager dressed in white: by the second play, she is tough, black-dressed and angry. Its reviews were mixed, a frequent phenomenon arising from the tension between audience expectations of ancient drama and the drive for contemporary resonances.¹¹⁷

113 Dietz (2009) 485. Foley (2012) 300–2 offers a useful list of recent productions, including references to reviews. A fragmenting device—with a mere eight Iphigenias—was also used to much darker effect in the experimental production by the Greek director Yannis Houvardas (1992) by the Greek Theater of New York which set the play in a bright white and nightmarish mental hospital: Hall (2012) 294–5; Foley (2012) 234.

114 Walton (1987) 346–9.

115 Foley (2002) reviews its 2001 revival.

116 Banfi (2006).

117 Hall (2012) 264–5.

The American writer and actor Ellen McLaughlin's *Iphigenia and Other Daughters* (1995) received the same mixed reaction for similar reasons.¹¹⁸ McLaughlin's trilogy comprises *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Sophocles' *Electra* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, along with material from Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in an avowedly feminist play about women in a male-dominated history. The first two plays trace the history of the brother and sister: an Iphigenia who meekly accepts death contrasts with a vengeful Electra and a shell-shocked Orestes. McLaughlin uses *Iphigenia in Tauris* to explore the difficulties of changing established expectations of men and women. In 18th-century plays, Orestes and Pylades struggle over who should die for the other. McLaughlin sets the siblings directly against one another, and since Orestes needs the statue to remove his family curse, Iphigenia sacrifices herself for patriarchy by becoming the statue herself. He is saved, but old patterns continue.¹¹⁹

In recent years, the play has once again inspired interest on college campuses in several productions designed to appeal to a new generation of theatre-goers. In *Effie and the Barbarians* (1995, revived in 2010) by Mary-Kay Gamel, Professor of Classics at the University of California at Santa Cruz, the Tauris events were conceived as her "girlish fantasy of escape from the brutal male militarism" of her death at Aulis.¹²⁰ In *Iphigenia Among the Stars* (2012), Yale drama students Jack Tamburri and Ben Fainstein transport the *Iphigenia* plays to a futuristic staging evoking vintage Star Trek and comic book art, on the questionable assumption that the characters of Greek tragedy are too grand for the contemporary world. Unusually, however, *Iphigenia in Tauris* is placed before *Iphigenia at Aulis*, so that Iphigenia metamorphoses the other way from Akalaitis, from a tough princess who will sacrifice foreigners, to Orestes' devoted sister, to a virginal girl expecting marriage to Achilles, to a sacrificial victim begging her father for mercy and finally the willing victim who transcends ordinary humanity.¹²¹

Alongside these more deliberate attempts to modernize the play for college audiences, there has also been room for "straight" productions. A touring version directed by Leonidas Loizides proved popular on multiple campuses and US theatres in 2011,¹²² while Anne Stewart Mark's 2011 production at the Utah Classical Greek Theatre Festival was in a consciously traditional mode.

118 Foley (1995) offers a sympathetic and enthusiastic account; also Andreach (1998).

119 Hall (2012) 266–7; Foley (2012) 235–6.

120 Hall (2012) 272.

121 For reviews, see Grenier (2012) and Brown (2012).

122 A video is available at <http://atheniandrama.wordpress.com/video-archives-2/iphigenia-in-tauris/>.

Revealing an apparently eternal opposition between us (Greeks) and them (barbarians) is the statement from the costume designer who imagined his “barbarian outland” of Tauris as a mix of African, Turkish and middle-eastern elements.¹²³

Lastly, mention should be made of several contemporary *Iphigenia in Tauris* plays which have a slightly more complex relationship with their original. *The Golden Age* by Australian writer Louis Nowra (1985) was inspired by a true story of a community lost in the Tasmanian outback in the 19th century. They were discovered in 1939, speaking a strange dialect and suffering from hereditary abnormalities. In Nowra’s play, two young Australians, the doctor’s son Peter Archer (Orestes) and his poorer friend Francis (Pylades) discover this community, including Betsheb, the barbarized half-animal Iphigenia figure, and bring them to their home for study by Peter’s father and others in a painful encounter. Framing their experiences are two charity productions of *Iphigenia in Tauris* set in front of a crumbling neoclassical temple in the Archers’ garden. The story represents a clash of old and new in the prosperous immigrant family’s attempt to cling onto European culture in a threatening environment and the irrevocable damage caused to the older community by being brought into “civilization” at last.¹²⁴ The Chicago playwright Eric Appleton’s *Iphegenia* [sic] *in Kingman* (2004) is set in the early 1950s in Kingman, Arizona on the premise that years earlier in Oklahoma, Agamemnon had sacrificed Iphigenia in return for rains to end a drought. Instead, she fled to a diner off Route 66 where Thoas is owner and cook and the chorus are waitresses. The clash between this somewhat gratuitous updating and the formal pentameter of Appleton’s verse was not entirely successful.¹²⁵

A post-modern *Iphigenia in Tauris*, reflecting on the continued influence of Greek myth on contemporary culture is the Japanese-Canadian Michi Barall’s *Rescue Me (A Postmodern Classic with Snacks)*, premiered in New York in 2010. Barall had already worked with *Iphigenia in Tauris* in her 2006 *Iphigenia@Tauris*, described as a “contemporary, freewheeling adaptation of Euripides’ play... with influences from Goethe’s version and the Gluck opera. Like the Greek original, the play is a dance-theatre romance about how individuals (and societies) go on after the wreckage of war, domestic or global, and how they begin to return home.” The tone of her second try is rather different:

123 Bannon (2011); Connors (2011).

124 Brisbane (1989) 89–169; Hall (2012) 288–92.

125 Reed (2004); more favorable is Hayford (2004).

In this dance-theatre adaptation of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Iphigenia is 34 and stuck in a dead-end job. Haunted by her past, her present situation is grim—she's at the mercy of a temperamental goddess and a barbarian king with a fondness for human sacrifice . . . *Rescue Me* is a tragicomedy about what to do when your Dad tries to kill you, your Mom freaks out, your brother goes crazy and you're surrounded by Barbarians.¹²⁶

Euripides' play is not 'tragic' in the popular sense, and Barall strongly foregrounds its light-hearted elements, with multimedia and sharp, funny dialogue infused with the language of popular entertainment.¹²⁷ Yet underneath its relentless (post)modernity lurk elements from older traditions of reception, such as Goethe's lovelorn Thoas: the resonances of a Japanese-Canadian writer's interpretation of this character are interesting.¹²⁸ Again, its clearly homoerotic dance between Pylades and Orestes has roots reaching to Pina Bausch¹²⁹ and to the eighteenth century and earlier.

Włodzimierz Staniewski's *Ifigenie w Taurydzie* (2011) mingles ancient Greek iconography with eastern European Christianity by juxtaposing images of Artemis with the traditional rites of Poland's Black Madonna of Czestochova. Edith Hall¹³⁰ offers an excellent thumbnail sketch of this highly experimental version, which, like many modern versions, rejects the relative optimism of Euripides, Goethe and others. At its end, a figure evoking Athena and Catherine the Great appears in triumph, reciting Euripides' prologue to the play and bearing a hammer and sickle in a supposedly happy ending promised both by communism and by the *dea ex machina*. But she is cut off by the arrival of young sword-dancers performing a menacing ritual of violence.

Lastly, Tony Harrison's adaptation of Euripides, *Iphigenia in Crimea*, was to be performed in the ancient theatre at Sevastopol in 2014. Due to funding difficulties and the situation in the Crimea, it featured instead in a conference held in London at King's College in July 2014.¹³¹

126 Both quotations are from the synopses of the plays at <http://www.doollee.com/PlaywrightsB/barall-michi.html>.

127 Hall (2012) 268–71; see also the critical but positive review of Sutton (2010).

128 See Chambers-Letson (2014), who includes a few photographs of the production.

129 See above, p. 279.

130 Hall (2012) 292–4.

131 For the conference program, see <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/chs/eventrecords/2013-14/greektheatreconfzxx.aspx>. For further information about Staniewski's production, see <http://gardzienice.org/en/IPHIGENIA-IN-T....html>.

Screen

Cinematic renditions of *Iphigenia in Tauris* are apparently lacking. An exception is a film made for German television in 1978, listed at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0199637/mediaindex>. But no further information is available.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Iphigenia in Tauris*

Earlier scholarship on *Iphigenia in Tauris* tended to focus on trying to define its genre, but recent work accepts that tragedy is a more elastic genre than was once thought, obviating the need for such definitions. Even so, the play was not really the focus of sustained scholarship until recently. Gliksohn (1985) focuses on the reception of both Iphigenia plays in earlier European tradition, and Hermann (2005) discusses significant responses to *Iphigenia in Tauris* in modern Germany. Kyriakou (2006) offers an advanced scholarly commentary including some material on reception. But transformative in the play's reception is Hall (2012) to which this chapter owes a huge debt. Hall's work will be definitive for a long time since it comprises not merely more obvious trends in dramatic and artistic reception of the play, but also the reception of the myth and its relationship to religion and art over a remarkably wide span of time and space.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

Literature

- Belfiore, E. (1992) "Aristotle and Iphigenia," in Rorty, A. (ed.) (1992) *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 359–77.
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Phoenician Women

Elizabeth W. Scharffenberger

Euripides' Phoenician Women (ca. 410–408 BC), set before the royal palace in Thebes, dramatizes the conflict of Eteocles and Polyneices, the sons of Oedipus and Jocasta—a tale that his spectators would have known from several earlier sources, including Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes (467 BC).¹

Jocasta explains in the prologue that Eteocles and Polyneices mistreated Oedipus, who had blinded himself upon discovering his crimes of parricide and incest. In retaliation, he cursed them, vowing that they would “divide the house with whetted iron” (l. 68). To thwart the curse, the brothers agreed to take turns as king of Thebes. Eteocles, however, refused to cede power, forcing Polyneices to retreat in exile to Argos.² Polyneices married the daughter of the Argive king, Adrastus, who promised to restore his new son-in-law to the throne of Thebes. The army led by Adrastus, Polyneices, and five other elite warriors—the Seven against Thebes—is now camped around the city. At the conclusion of her speech, in which she traces her family's woes back to the day Cadmus, the founder of Thebes' royal family, arrived from Phoenicia, Jocasta explains that she has arranged for a truce, so that her sons can meet in the city and (she hopes) be reconciled.

After Jocasta's departure, Antigone and an aged male attendant emerge and climb onto the top of the building to survey the attacking army. After they return to the palace, the chorus of women from Phoenicia enter. Their song describes how they had been dispatched from their homeland to serve the god Apollo at Delphi, but have been stranded in Thebes by the approach of the Argive army. Polyneices subsequently arrives and enjoys a bittersweet reunion with his mother, until his brother Eteocles appears. Reconciliation between the brothers proves impossible. Polyneices insists on the justice of his cause; Eteocles dismisses all talk of justice, averring that he prizes absolute power above all else. Jocasta attempts to expose the folly of each son's stance, but her arguments fail to convince, and the parley devolves into an ugly confrontation. Polyneices then hurries from the city.

1 Mastronarde (1994) 17–30 surveys the sources for the ‘Thebaid’ myth available to Euripides.

2 *Phoenician Women* 71 identifies Polyneices as the younger brother. In early poetry, the sons of Oedipus were likely twins; see Mastronarde (1994) 27 n. 3. For the relative ages of the brothers in later works of reception, see Beyerle (1973) 152; Argent (2010) 111 n. 11; Korneeva (2011) 89–90.

After a choral song that recalls Cadmus' arrival from Phoenicia and his killing of a great serpent, sacred to the war-god Ares, on the future site of Thebes, Eteocles consults his maternal uncle Creon. Creon advises his nephew about strategies for defending the city, and in turn receives instructions about what to do in case of Eteocles' death. Eteocles departs for battle. The seer Teiresias brings Creon horrible tidings that Ares is still outraged by Cadmus' killing of his sacred serpent, and that the war-god, who now threatens to destroy Thebes, can only be appeased by the blood sacrifice of Creon's younger son Menoeceus. Creon bids Menoeceus, who has been present throughout Teiresias' speech, to flee the city. But after Creon's departure Menoeceus asserts his determination to die in order to save Thebes, and he departs for the ramparts. A messenger reports Menoeceus' self-immolation to Jocasta. After describing the Theban defenders' success in warding off the attacking army, the messenger warns Jocasta that her sons are about to fight in a single combat. Intent on interceding once again in her sons' quarrel, Jocasta leaves for the battlefield with Antigone in tow.

As he mourns Menoeceus' death, Creon learns from another messenger that his nephews have killed each other, and that Jocasta, having witnessed the dying moments of her sons, committed suicide. Antigone returns with the three corpses and calls Oedipus outside so that he can grieve with her. Their lamentation is interrupted by Creon's command that Oedipus leave the city.³ The new king also announces that, in keeping with Eteocles' instructions, Antigone will marry Creon's surviving son Haemon, and Polyneices' corpse will remain unburied. Frustrated by Creon in her efforts to perform funerary rites for Polyneices, Antigone promises to escort her father into exile, and the tragedy concludes with their departure.

In Literature

The evidence from papyri and other sources indicates that *Phoenician Women* was widely popular in antiquity.⁴ It was an important school text in the

3 Mastronarde (1994) 39–49, 590–4, 627–8 argues that the ending of *Phoenician Women* as preserved in the manuscripts, from Creon's intervention in 1584 until 1736, is for the most part authentically Euripidean. Several passages in the tragedy have been suspected as interpolations: see, e.g., Kovacs (1982) 42–5 and (2002) 264–7; Mastronarde (1994) 307–8. In works of reception, most of the passages disputed by modern scholars have been accepted as authentic.

4 Bremmer (1983); Braund (1997) 113.

Greek-speaking eastern regions of the Roman Empire,⁵ and passages from it, if not the tragedy *in toto*, were well known to both Greek and Roman authors, including Cicero (106–43 BC), Seneca (ca. 2 BC–65 AD), Plutarch (ca. 45–120 AD), and Epictetus (ca. 55–135 AD).⁶ *Phoenician Women*, along with *Orestes* and *Hecuba*, constitute the ‘Byzantine triad’ of tragedies that were, of all the Euripidean dramas that survived into the medieval period, the most frequently copied and studied.⁷ When Greek texts were brought to western Europe after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, *Phoenician Women* was one of the first Athenian tragedies adapted for Italian and then English audiences in the mid-16th century.⁸ For the past few centuries, however, it has not been among the most widely performed or widely adapted Euripidean dramas in Europe and the United States.

The complex plot of *Phoenician Women*, and the richness in characterization and thematic interests that is made possible by the complexity of its action and its large cast of characters, constitute significant reasons for the tragedy’s popularity for many centuries.⁹ By introducing Jocasta as a principal figure and having her attempt to reconcile her sons before they fight, Euripides is able to stage a lengthy confrontation between Eteocles and Polyneices.¹⁰ This confrontation brims with emotional intensity, as the loving mother struggles to be heard by her embittered sons. It also raises concerns that have resonated across the centuries, despite the fact that the tragedian’s framing of these concerns (for example, the difficulties of exile) was informed by the specific crises in Athens that arose after the oligarchic coup of 411 BC.¹¹ The depth of Jocasta’s characterization fascinated many readers and adaptors in later ages. Equally engaging was Jocasta’s critique of Eteocles’ all-consuming quest for power (ll. 531–67), in which she articulates a sweeping vision of cosmic order and of the socio-political obligations this order imposes on human beings. This passage

5 Cribiori (2001).

6 Beers (1914) 96–124 lists passages from Euripidean tragedies cited by later ancient authors; see also Papadopoulou (2008) 104–8.

7 Mastronarde (1994) 49–50.

8 Latin translations fostered the dissemination of Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* in the mid-16th century; see Papadopoulou (2008) 117–8.

9 Cribiori (2001) 245–50; Miola (2002) 33–4; Papadopoulou (2008) 135 n. 1.

10 In Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*, Jocasta predeceased her sons’ conflict; cf. Sophocles’ treatment of her suicide in *Oedipus the King*. On Euripides’ possible debt to the representation of the mother of Oedipus’ sons by the archaic lyric poet Stesichorus (ca. 640–555 BC), see Mueller-Goldingen (1985) 30–5.

11 On the topicality of *Phoenician Women*, see Ebener (1964); de Romilly (1967); Neumann (1995) 57–76; Hose (1995) 113–26.

yielded many *sententiae* (“maxims/aphorism”) that provided fruitful points of departure for writers of all kinds.¹² It is consequently no surprise that Jocasta and her arguments are central in many works inspired by this Euripidean tragedy, from the Roman writer and philosopher Seneca’s *Phoenician Women* (ca. 65 AD), to the Greek orator Dio’s *On Acquisitiveness* (late 1st century AD), to the poet Lodovico Dolce’s Italian tragedy *Giocasta* (1549) and its English adaptation, *Jocasta*, by the poets George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe (1566).¹³

The reasonableness demonstrated by Euripides’ Jocasta draws attention to the nexus of values and attitudes that make it impossible for her sons to reconcile, and more generally to the inability of reason to penetrate the dark corners of human desire and will.¹⁴ Eteocles is committed to holding onto power as a good in itself, disregarding all considerations of justice and his city’s best interests (ll. 499–525). Polyneices initially appears to be cut from different cloth, but it becomes clear that, despite his claim to be motivated by justice, he is as intransigent as his brother, and just as willing as Eteocles to sacrifice the welfare of his family and his people (ll. 439–42, 568–83).¹⁵ Interest in what impels Oedipus’ sons to war is intensified through the contrast supplied by their idealistic young cousin Menoeceus, whose voluntary suicide guarantees the salvation of Thebes.¹⁶ Like several other Euripidean tragedies, *Phoenician Women* draws attention to the suffering and uncertainty experienced during times of war by non-combatants, particularly women.¹⁷ Thus, with its hard-edged perspective on the causes and consequences of civil war, *Phoenician Women* provided a fertile source of inspiration for later authors: the Roman

12 Cribiori (2001) 248–50.

13 On Seneca’s *Phoenician Women* and Dio’s *On Acquisitiveness*, see below, pp. 299–300 and 303–4, on Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe’s *Jocasta*, see below, n. 15.

14 Mastronarde (1986) 204–6; Scharffenberger (1995) 329–34; Miola (2002) 41.

15 For a different interpretation of ll. 439–42, see Mastronarde (1994) 271. The characterization of Polyneices in works of reception varies. In Statius’ *Thebaid* (ca. 80–92 AD), Polyneices exhibits great tenderness toward his mother and sisters (7. 492–6), but he and Eteocles are ultimately presented as equally “frenzied” (e.g., 11.435–46). On Statius’ *Thebaid*, see below, pp. 300–2. The identical nature of the brothers is also emphasized in some later adaptations, such as Jean Racine’s French tragedy *La Thébaïde* (1664). Other adaptations, such as Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe’s English tragedy *Jocasta* (1566), Robert Garnier’s French tragedy *Antigone, ou la piété* (“Antigone, or piety,” 1580), and Vittorio Alfieri’s Italian drama *Polinice* (1783), represent Polyneices more sympathetically.

16 Zeitlin (1990) 142–3. Menoeceus is most likely a Euripidean invention; see Mastronarde (1994) 29.

17 On this topic, see, e.g., above, Chapter 2.

epic poet Statius (ca. 45–96 AD) foremost among them, along with playwrights such as Jean Racine (1639–1699) and Jane Robe (early 18th century), and expository writers such as the Greek author Plutarch (ca. 46–120 AD)—who sought to probe the forces that bring about civil strife, and to prompt reflection on the havoc it wreaks.

While *Phoenician Women* locates the origins of the brothers' conflict in their own self-serving attitudes and misplaced priorities, it also never loses sight of the external factors that impel them to harm themselves and the ones they hold dear: the curse of their father and, more distantly, the legacy of violence imposed on their family since Cadmus' arrival from Phoenicia, which becomes the central concern of the choral songs.¹⁸ Thus the mutual destruction of Eteocles and Polyneices, as well as the collateral damage their hostility inflicts on their family and community, seem simultaneously inevitable and voluntarily embraced. They appear inevitable, because they are determined by factors beyond the young men's control, and voluntarily chosen, because the option of acting differently, as their mother urges, is in their reach. The tragedy thus raises significant questions about human agency and choice, and about the role that gods and other superhuman forces may play in determining the destinies of mortal men and women. The openings created by *Phoenician Women* for exploring the 'freedom' of human action, as well as the workings of divine will, Fate, Fortune, and Providence, thus generate another nexus of themes that proved attractive to many later adaptors, including several authors already mentioned (Seneca, Statius, Garnier, Dolce, Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe, and Racine), and also the medieval imitators of Statius' *Thebaid*, such as the anonymous author of the 12th-century Old French poem, *Le Roman de Thèbes*, and John Lydgate, author of the English poem *The Siege of Thebes* (ca. 1422).

The carefully nuanced development of other figures in the tragedy also fired the imagination of later adaptors. Antigone matures quickly as she steps into the role of caretaker left vacant by her mother's suicide.¹⁹ Menoeceus loves his father enough to deceive him with tenderness, but is committed above all to protecting his city with his life. In contrast to his broadminded son, the loving father Creon, Eteocles' loyal right-hand man, is shown to be subject to the same narrowness of purpose that afflicts his nephews, which becomes all the more conspicuous in his harsh dealings with Oedipus and Antigone in

18 Arthur (1977); also Podlecki (1963) 362–7; Zeitlin (1990) 142–3.

19 Cf. Papadopoulou (2008) 112.

the final episode.²⁰ Oedipus' expressions of grief and regret in the finale, though pitiable, are tinged with the self-regard evident in the tragedy's other adult male figures. These characterizations supplied rich territory for later authors who sought to embellish and innovate upon what they found in Euripides. Their innovations include making Menoeceus a full-grown man who fights for Thebes (Statius), introducing new characters, such as Ismene, Polyneices' wife Argia, and Haemon (Statius, followed by many others), and the transformation of Creon into a villain bent on taking over sovereignty of Thebes (Dolce, Racine, Alfieri, and Robe²¹). Yet, despite the fact that these authors frequently diverge from what the tragedian presents, their innovations are nonetheless indebted to Euripides' interest in character development and interactions.

In summary, *Phoenician Women* tracks several principal characters and keeps in sight several significant themes and concerns: ambition, greed, the allure of power, fear, the trials of exile and the horrors of war; also patriotism, bravery, loyalty, familial affection as well as strife.²² The hardships of old age, and gender and gender biases, are plainly at issue, too.²³ In works inspired by *Phoenician Women*, we find these themes and also others that reflect concerns of their own times. In Gascoigne and Kinweltershe's *Jocasta* (1566), the struggle between Eteocles and Polyneices affords opportunities for broaching the questions concerning royal succession that troubled Britain's political classes during the reign of Elizabeth I, and for exploring the political competence of women.²⁴ Composed in the tumultuous years after the St. Bartholemew's Day massacre in 1571, Robert Garnier's *Antigone, ou la piété* ("Antigone, or piety," 1580), which melds the plots of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and Sophocles' *Antigone*, addresses contemporary religious controversies by having Antigone

20 Cf. Craik (1988) 24; Mastronarde (1994) 372, 593.

21 These negative representations of Creon seem inspired by the suspicion concerning Creon's ambitions voiced by Statius' Eteocles (11.298–308), which perhaps derives from Oedipus' accusation in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* 378. Creon is also negatively portrayed in Jean Rotrou's French tragedy *Antigone* (1637), which combines plot elements from Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and Sophocles' *Antigone*.

22 Craik (1988) 41–4 discusses the multiplicity of themes in the tragedy; also Rawson (1970); Mueller-Goldingen (1985) 267–71.

23 Goff (1988) 136 notes "the manifest inability of the men in the city—particularly Eteocles—to provide a central source of stable authority from which [Thebes] might meet her foes"

24 Pigman (2000) 513; Austen (2008) 54; Ward (2013) 62–71.

vigorously reject the notion of her family's predestination to misfortune.²⁵ The repercussions of the conflict between Protestants and Catholics also figure into *The Fatal Legacy*, Jane Robe's 1723 adaptation of Racine's *La Thébaïde*, in which bitterness about the Jacobite risings in the United Kingdom after the ascension of George I informs the unsympathetic treatment of Polyneices as a pretender.²⁶ Turning to recent works of reception, we can find ambitious 'repurposings' of Euripides' tragedy that address issues of our own day. Liz Lochhead's *Thebans* (2003), Steven Gridley's *Post-Oedipus* (2004), and Martin Crimp's *The Rest Will Be Familiar to You from Cinema* (2013) distance audiences from the royal family of Thebes, reflecting modern unease about the privileges of the powerful,²⁷ and Elise Kermani's film *Jocasta* (2008) reshapes the ending of Euripides' tragedy so as to explore contemporary alternatives to ancient understandings of 'sacrifice.'²⁸

One reason for the eclipse of *Phoenician Women* in more recent times is, perhaps, the very richness in characters, themes, and plot that made it so attractive in earlier ages. Described as "rambling to the point of being picaresque" in a review of a recent production,²⁹ the tragedy lacks the compactness that characterizes the ancient tragedies that are now popular, such as Euripides' *Medea* and Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. Yet *Phoenician Women* still stays in view. As will be discussed below, it has received several new stagings in just the past two decades.³⁰ Moreover, the dramatic adaptations by Lochhead, Gridley, and Crimp, as well as Kermani's film and even the occasional blog-posting,³¹ demonstrate that *Phoenician Women* is still a source of an important inspiration for artists and others interested in using old plays to explore new—and not-so-new—ideas, problems, and possibilities.

Among non-dramatic literary works indebted to *Phoenician Women*, the Latin epic poem *Thebaid* by Publius Papinius Statius takes precedence because of its own considerable influence during the medieval period. This influence is

25 Biot (1998). Controversies concerning predestination and free will shape other adaptations of this era; see Osho (1977–1978) 87 and 92 on the influence of Jansenism in Racine's *La Thébaïde*.

26 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 44, 82–3 discuss Alexander Pope's promotion of Robe's play and its anonymously authored companion essay. See Anonymous (1723); Racine (1723).

27 Cf. Corbett (2013) 78 on Lochhead; Haydon (2013) on Crimp.

28 For discussions of the plays by Lochhead and Crimp, and of Kermani's film, see below, pp. 308–10; 310–2; 312–4.

29 Underwood (1996); cf. Pigman (2000) 510; Miola (2002) 33.

30 See below, pp. 307–12.

31 E.g., the "From the Corner of Laurel and Elmo" blog (May 20, 2013): <http://laurelandelmo.wordpress.com/tag/seven-against-thebes/>.

evident not only in the long medieval poems directly modeled on it (e.g., the 12th-century *Le Roman de Thèbes* and John Lydgate's *The Siege of Thebes*, ca. 1422), but also in treatments of the myth in different genres, such as the Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio's entry on Jocasta in *On Famous Women* (1374).³² Roughly a generation before Statius, the Roman philosopher and dramatist Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 2 BC–65 AD) composed a tragedy in Latin titled *Phoenician Women*, which also derived inspiration from Euripides' drama, and some aspects of Seneca's play anticipate features of Statius' treatment.

The five centuries that separated Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and the adaptation by Seneca, which may have dated to the final years of its author's life,³³ produced several epic poems in Greek (and possibly Latin, too) titled *Thebaid*, including the Greek epic by Antimachus (ca. 400 BC).³⁴ We know so little about these epic poems, however, that the extent of their debts to Euripides and their influence on later Roman authors such as Seneca and Statius are also unknowable. In the sole surviving fragment of the Latin tragedy *Sabine Women* by Quintus Ennius (240–170 BC), there is possibly an echo of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 571–6.³⁵ Roughly twenty verses of the tragedy *Phoenician Women* by the poet Lucius Accius (ca. 170–86 BC), also in Latin, survive. These verses suggest that Accius' drama adhered rather closely to Euripides' plot.³⁶

Seneca's *Phoenician Women* (ca. 65 AD) appears fragmentary. It lacks choral songs; there is no reference in the extant verses to Phoenician women or to a chorus, and the shifts of scene are abrupt.³⁷ The drama's first section (ll. 1–362) evokes Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* as well as Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 1710–36, as it depicts Oedipus wandering in voluntary exile through the wilderness of Mount Cithaeron, accompanied by Antigone.³⁸ Oedipus knows of the rift between his sons and predicts its awful conclusion (ll. 273–87), but, as in Lucius Accius, he does not appear to have cursed Eteocles and Polyneices.³⁹ Nonetheless, he vigorously resists appeals from Antigone and a messenger, who urge him to try to make peace between them (ll. 288–362).

32 On Statius' influence, see Battles (2004) 1–17 and 145; also Mozley (1928) vol 1: xxvi–xxvii; Steiner (1984) 181.

33 Fitch (2002) 278.

34 Bulloch (1989) 67; Papadopoulou (2008) 113; Hutchinson (2013) 298 n. 8.

35 Ennius, *Sabine Women* 370–1 (Vahlen 1967); Mueller-Goldingen (1995) 83; Boyle (2006) 86.

36 Warmington (1936) 524–31; Frank (1995) 25–7.

37 Frank (1995) 3–16; Mueller-Goldingen (1995) 83–4; Fitch (2002) 275. Tarrant (1978) 262 accounts for the apparent incompleteness of Seneca's *Phoenician Women* by suggesting that the text "might represent an experiment in a new form of dramatic poetry."

38 Frank (1995) 17; Mueller-Goldingen (1995).

39 Frank (1995) 26.

A shift of scene, from Cithaeron to Thebes, marks the beginning of the second section (ll. 363–442), which has more obvious ties to Euripides.⁴⁰ An attendant tells Jocasta about her sons' impending combat (ll. 387–402; cf. Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 1217–83), and Jocasta quickly departs for the battlefield at Antigone's urging (ll. 403–26). In another sudden shift, Jocasta stands between Eteocles and Polyneices on the battlefield (ll. 427–664). Although the timing and setting of her intervention differ from Euripides, the general conception of this final section of Seneca's drama appears reminiscent of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 446–637.⁴¹ The text breaks off in the middle of verbal sparring between Eteocles and Polyneices that, as in Euripides, sidelines Jocasta's peace-making efforts (ll. 651–64; cf. Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 588–637).

Whereas Eteocles, Polyneices, and Jocasta are granted more-or-less 'equal time' in Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 446–637, Seneca's Jocasta dominates the encounter with her sons, castigating Polyneices at length for his planned attack (ll. 500–85) and even suggesting alternative military projects (ll. 599–625). Like Oedipus, Jocasta dwells on the crimes she unwittingly committed (ll. 443–64; cf. 216–73), but her response to her family's troubles differs completely from that of her husband. Whereas Oedipus succumbs to the nihilistic wish for "the whole house" to collapse (ll. 340–7), Jocasta uses every resource at her disposal to safeguard her sons and her city, physically interposing herself between the armies and inviting the soldiers to turn their weapons on her (ll. 443–9).⁴² A principal interest in Seneca's *Phoenician Women*, then, appears to be the contrast between Oedipus's and Jocasta's responses to severe misfortune.⁴³

The first six books of Statius' *Thebaid*, generally dated to ca. 80–92 AD, detail the events that bring Polyneices and his Argive army to the walls of Thebes. The reminiscences of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* accordingly begin in book 7. But in each instance Statius' treatment noticeably departs from Euripides, and in places it seems influenced by Seneca's *Phoenician Women*.⁴⁴ As in Euripides' prologue, Antigone and a male attendant survey an army, but Statius' characters look out on the Theban allies, not the Argive attackers (7. 243–374). Soon afterwards, Jocasta leads Antigone and Ismene to the Argive

40 Frank (1995) 21; Mueller-Goldingen (1995).

41 Mueller-Goldingen (1995) 89.

42 As is discussed below (p. 305), scenes depicting Jocasta intervening between her sons on the battlefield appear on objects dating to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. See also Fitch (2002) 279–80.

43 Cf. Fitch (2002) 276–8.

44 Vessey (1973) esp. 270–4.

camp with the intention of persuading Polyneices to enter Thebes under a truce (7. 475–563). Like Seneca's *Phoenician Women* 427–664, Statius' scene recalls both the reunion of Jocasta and Polyneices staged in Euripides' first episode (ll. 301–442) and also the subsequent mission of Jocasta and Antigone to the battlefield before the single combat (ll. 1264–83, 1427–65). But Statius denies Jocasta the chance to reconcile her sons, since Polyneices' brother-in-law Tydeus vetoes her plan to have them meet face-to-face in Thebes. Menoeceus' self-sacrifice and all that leads up to it (10. 589–780) recalls Euripides' treatment (ll. 890–1018); Creon's son, however, is no child, but a capable warrior who, along with his brother Haemon, contributes significantly to the Theban cause. Jocasta and Antigone's final attempts to intercede before the brothers' single combat (11. 315–402) look back yet again at their effort at intervention in Euripides' penultimate episode (ll. 1264–83, 1427–65). Antigone comes to the battlefield to lament over her brothers' corpses (11. 580–633); the parent accompanying her, however, is Oedipus, at long last repenting his curse. Jocasta, it is subsequently revealed, has already taken her own life in the palace after hearing the initial shouts of her sons' duel (11. 634–47).

The departures from Euripides in plot point to deeper differences in Statius' *Thebaid's* treatment of the myth of "the Seven," which are perhaps exemplified by Statius' reshaping of Jocasta's character. Far removed from the sensible, self-possessed mediator of *Phoenician Women*, Jocasta in *Thebaid* is a study in grief and frenzy. Compared to "the most ancient of the Furies" (7. 474–7) and to crazed Agave (11. 315–28),⁴⁵ she is never given the chance to develop the kind of coherent, reasoned argument concerning political and moral principles that is the centerpiece of the Euripidean Jocasta's mediating strategy.⁴⁶ Like so many other figures in Statius' poem, she seems barely in control of herself. Even Menoeceus, who in Euripides frees himself from the legacy of familial dysfunction, appears in Statius unable to extricate his heroic act of self-sacrifice from

45 The related similes, where this comparison occurs, recall the characterizations of Dido and Amata in Virgil's *Aeneid* 4. 450–7 and 7. 341–405.

46 Vessey (1973) 273: "[Jocasta's] speech to Eteocles [in 11. 319–52] is frenzied, staccato, extreme." Cf. the comparison of Jocasta to "a madwoman" in Seneca's *Phoenician Women* 427. John Lydgate, though imitating Statius' plot, restores composure to his Jocasta in *The Siege of Thebes* 3648–4004, perhaps to accommodate late medieval sensibilities concerning the conduct of a mature queen. Cf. Battles (2004) 158–74. The Jocasas of later adaptations vary considerably in temperament, from capable (Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe) to frail (Racine) to physically abusive (Crimp) to resilient (Kermani). In Rotrou's *Antigone* (on which see also above, n. 21; below, n. 70) Jocasta calls down on her sons' heads a curse that evokes the imprecation traditionally attributed to Oedipus.

“the grim, self-destructive logic of Theban history.”⁴⁷ The impression of the helplessness of *Thebaid*’s human characters, as they are swept along by irresistible forces, is amplified by the attention that the poet, taking advantage of epic poetry’s narrative conventions, focuses on the divine ‘machinery’ behind virtually every development, beginning with the Fury Tisaphone’s goading of Polyneices (1. 88–196).⁴⁸ Assurances of divine order, as in Jupiter’s explanation that the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices are demanded by “earth and heaven and piety and injured trust and nature, and by the very customs of the Furies” (7. 216–8), are thus balanced against breathtaking demonstrations of human vulnerability that seem to surpass Euripides’ vision of mortal frailty.⁴⁹

The quotations from *Phoenician Women* in expository writings by Greek authors active in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD represent a wholly different mode of reception—one that was closely related to the employment of the tragedy (or portions thereof) in educational settings in the Greek East. Many of the citations from *Phoenician Women* in essays and other expository works from the Imperial period are little more than ‘soundbites.’ In some texts, however, more sustained engagements with material from the tragedy provide opportunities for moralizing on serious matters of practical and philosophical concern. Notable examples are two essays titled *On Exile* by Plutarch and Favorinus (ca. 80–160 AD), a Roman philosopher from Arelate (Arles) in Gaul, who wrote in Greek. Both draw on verses in *Phoenician Women* 344–407, in which Polyneices, along with Jocasta, laments his life in exile.⁵⁰ The Platonizing Plutarch and the Stoic-influenced Favorinus adopt similar stances, arguing that separation from one’s homeland does not cause genuine hardship, but rather should be calmly accepted by the sensible man. They accordingly present Jocasta’s and Polyneices’ complaints as examples of misguided negative views that should be rejected. In the penultimate section of his essay, Plutarch discredits every claim about the disadvantages of exile in *Phoenician Women* 388–405. Favorinus establishes attachment to one’s native land as a

47 Heinrich (1999) 166; for a different reading, see Papadopoulou (2008) 115–6.

48 On Statius’ debts to Virgil, and the relationship of his *Thebaid* to the ‘secularized’ treatment of the civil wars in Rome at the end of the Republican era in Lucan’s *Pharsalia* (ca. 62 AD), see Vessey (1973) 196–229; Franchet d’Espèrey (2003) 4–5; Walter (2013). Korneeva (2011) 119–20 argues that, in Statius, gods as well as human characters are caught up by the forces of envy set loose by Tisiphone.

49 Theseus’ intervention (12.519–796) may provide an optimistic counterpoint to the bleak vision of the first eleven books; see e.g. Franchet d’Espèrey (2003) 5.

50 Whitmarsh (2001) 302–24; Guerra (2007) 32–48.

principal cause for fears about exile; he then challenges the tearful expressions of affection voiced by Euripides' Polyneices for the "halls and altars of the gods and the training grounds on which I was raised and the water of Dirce" (*Phoenician Women* 367–8) with a direct address that aims to expose Euripides' character as both wrongheaded and disingenuous (7. 2, vi.25). This last point strikes a common chord with Plutarch, who analogously argues that Polyneices misrepresents his lack of friends and resources (*Moralia* 606e–f).⁵¹

These essays plainly speak to concerns of the Imperial era, when individuals living under Roman rule could find themselves separated from their native cities, for long periods of time and at great distances, because of any number of factors. These factors included (but were not limited to) legally imposed orders of exile, which under Roman law could carry different sorts of restrictions on mobility and the retention of citizenship and property. There can be no doubt that the experience of such long-term, if not permanent, dislocation was often stressful, even when it was not inflicted as a punishment. In their discussions of exile, Plutarch and Favorinus clearly aim to offer their audiences solace in many different situations of separation. In doing so, they understand 'exile' in the broadest possible terms and minimize the harshness of the penalties (permanent banishment, disenfranchisement, and confiscation of property) that Euripides and his fellow Athenians would have associated with being cast out of their city. The criticisms of Jocasta and Polyneices in these two essays are thus founded on re-conceptualizations of 'exile' that, as they accommodate the full range of contemporary experiences, elide the hardships that are central to Euripides' conception.

The quotations from *Phoenician Women* in the writings of Plutarch, Favorinus, and other writers of their era were plainly motivated by respect for Euripides' influence and popularity.⁵² But this respect did not guarantee that verses culled from *Phoenician Women* were accurately cited or contextualized in their writings. In *On Exile* (20.3, xviii.5–9), Favorinus represents Polyneices, not Eteocles, as the target of Jocasta's reproach concerning the evils of ambition (*philotimia*) in *Phoenician Women* 531–5. The very same passage is misquoted in the discourse *On Acquisitiveness* by the Greek orator, writer and

51 Plutarch and Favorinus also formulate similar responses to the importance Jocasta and Polyneices attach to specific places and features of Thebes. As Favorinus puts it, "the *gymnasia* there [in Argos] are also fine" (7.3; vi.46–7; cf. *Moralia* 606f).

52 In *On Exile*, Plutarch explains that an examination of "what [Euripides] says" is necessary because "the words of Euripides influence many, as he is thought to condemn exile in powerful terms" (*Moralia* 605f). Cf. Dio 17.9: "And indeed Euripides, who is as well regarded as any other poet, represents Jocasta saying the following to Eteocles."

philosopher Dio of Prusa (ca. 40–115 AD). To support the claim that acquisitiveness is harmful not just to the individual, but also to his family, friends, and community, Dio quotes ten verses from Jocasta's criticism of ambition, with the crucial substitution in line 532 of the word *pleonexia* ("acquisitiveness") for Euripides' *philotimia* ("ambition") (17.9).⁵³ The misquotation clearly helps Dio cast Jocasta's reproach to Eteocles as a neat summary of "all the things that arise from acquisitiveness" (17. 10). Plutarch, too, appears to rely on Euripides' *Phoenician Women* as a means of problematizing acquisitive behavior;⁵⁴ and we might reasonably conclude that "in the Greek east in Plutarch's day, Jocasta's speech, if not the *Phoenician Women tout court*, could be read as a treatment of the evils of *pleonexia*."⁵⁵ Concerns about acquisitiveness are elsewhere very much in Plutarch's and Dio's thoughts. In particular, both authors worry that the competitive squabbling for power among elite citizens in the formerly independent city-states of Greece and Asia Minor could spark civic unrest, which could in turn bring about the unwelcome military intervention of the Romans.⁵⁶ It is arguable, then, that Dio and Plutarch aimed to address this contemporary political phenomenon by re-interpreting—and even re-writing—verses from Euripides' *Phoenician Women*.

The reliance on *Phoenician Women* in schools and its importance to writers of moralizing works, such as Plutarch and Dio, doubtless played a role in guaranteeing the survival of its text in the Greek-speaking east from late antiquity until the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The enduring popularity of Statius' *Thebaid* ensured lively interest in the tragedy when it was rediscovered in western Europe in the early 16th century. Statius' treatment has remained so influential that, in many modern works indebted to *Phoenician Women*, the presence of *Thebaid* is also palpable. An illustration of this phenomenon is Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem *Tiresias*, begun in 1833 but not published until 1885. Tennyson's poem imagines the seer's direct appeal to Menoeceus, as he attempts to convince the youth to give up his life for the sake of his city's safety. The premise of the encounter can be traced back to *Phoenician Women*, but the "passionate plea for Menoeceus' suicide" of Tennyson's *Tiresias*, with its many repetitions of the word "Virtue," seems to find its closest parallels in the prophecy of Statius' *Teiresias* (*Thebaid* 10. 615) and the goddess *Virtue's*

53 Euripides' wording in ll. 539–40 associates *philotimia* with *pleonexia*: see Mastronarde (1994) 303.

54 Braund (1997).

55 Braund (1997) 115.

56 E.g., Plutarch, *Political Precepts* 813b–817b; Dio 48.4–6.

exhortation of Menoeceus (*Thebaid* 10. 655–7).⁵⁷ Yet the most intriguing feature of Tennyson's poem is its departure from Euripides and Statius' shared conception of Menoeceus as a foil to his destructively self-absorbed cousins. Rather, the youth's potential for great achievement is repeatedly contrasted with the elderly seer's helplessness, and it is from his own weak, ineffectual self that Tennyson's Teiresias seeks to differentiate his young and capable listener.⁵⁸

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

Since the archaic period, the story of "the Seven" and, more generally, myths concerning the Theban royal family have inspired countless works of art, and several ancient depictions seem indebted to Euripides' *Phoenician Women*. One bowl, dating to the late 3rd or early 2nd century BC, includes scenes with a messenger warning Jocasta, who gestures to Antigone, Creon at Teiresias' knees, and Polyneices and Eteocles in combat.⁵⁹ Another bowl, dating to the same period, depicts Antigone grieving over the bodies of her brothers; Polyneices, still alive, extends his arm, and Jocasta raises a sword to her breast.⁶⁰ Two Etruscan alabaster urns also dating to this period bear carvings that depict Jocasta interposing herself on the battlefield between Eteocles and Polyneices. There are a Roman sarcophagus and a Roman funerary urn, both dating to the 2nd century AD, with similar depictions.⁶¹ Other objects have a less certain relationship to the tragedy. For example, an Apuleian wine-jug dating to the mid-4th century BC possibly depicts the encounter between Creon and Teiresias, to which Menoeceus silently listens, in *Phoenician Women* 834–959. But the scene may be, instead, the confrontation between Oedipus and Teiresias in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* 297–462.⁶²

Few modern works of visual art appear to have a direct connection to *Phoenician Women*. The 19th-century French painter Edouard Toudouze's

57 Goslee (1976) 157.

58 Cf. Singh (2005) 43–6 on the contrast between Menoeceus and Tiresias, who, on Singh's interpretation, is Tennyson's alter-ego and "mouthpiece."

59 Krauskopf (1981) I.1: 820–2; cf. Papadopoulou (2008) 108–9.

60 Krauskopf (1981) I.1: 821.

61 Krauskopf (1988) IV.1: 29 and 32; see also Papadopoulou (2008) 108. These depictions seem to conflate, as in Seneca and Statius, the Euripidean Jocasta's two attempts at intervention (*Phoenician Women* 446–637 and 1427–59).

62 Krauskopf (1992) VI.1: 476.

Farewell of Oedipus to the Corpses of His Wife and Sons (1871), currently housed in Paris at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts, is an exception. It depicts Oedipus kneeling by the body of Jocasta as Antigone comforts him; the bodies of Eteocles and Polyneices are visible in the background. The scene corresponds closely to *Phoenician Women* 1565–81, in which Oedipus attends Jocasta's corpse as Antigone sings of her mother's final moments.

Music

As for every drama performed in the Theater of Dionysus, music was a key component in the original performance of *Phoenician Women*, which features not only choral odes but several songs for actors. We can reasonably assume that music also figured significantly throughout antiquity in revival performances of the tragedy and other types of theatrical adaptations, even if the melodies were not those used in the first performance. Music has played an important role in dramatic adaptations in more recent times: for instance, the music (now lost) that accompanied the elaborate dumbshows and choral pieces in Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe's *Jocasta*, and Kostas Vomvolos' score for the 1999 production of *Phoenician Women* by the National Theatre of Northern Greece in Epidaurus.⁶³ *Phoenician Women* also influenced the renowned Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis' *Symphony No. 4* (1987) and his opera *Antigone* (1999).⁶⁴ But, in general, it seems that this Euripidean tragedy has only occasionally inspired modern works of music apart from what is used in dramatic productions and adaptations.

Dance

Like music, dance figured significantly in the original performance of *Phoenician Women*, and the same seems certain of revival performances in antiquity. The chorus would have danced while singing their odes, and some of the solo arias, such as Jocasta's monody in *Phoenician Women* 301–54, may have been accompanied by stylized movements.⁶⁵ Dance is important in more recent revivals and adaptations, as well—for example, in Elise Kermani's film *Jocasta*, the Chorus (played by a single actor) and Antigone speak no words, expressing themselves solely through movement. But again, as for music, there

63 Vomvolos (1999).

64 Papadopoulou (2008) 121–3.

65 The first verses of Jocasta's song, "I hear your Phoenician cry... and draw a trembling step with my foot..." (ll. 301–3), suggest that the song was accompanied by movement, perhaps stylized movement that could be characterized as 'dance.'

appears to be no major dance piece, such as Martha Graham's *Clytemnestra* and *Night Journey*,⁶⁶ that derives inspiration from *Phoenician Women*.

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Phoenician Women has met with its best reception on the stage.⁶⁷ The tragedy has been periodically performed in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States, ever since the practice of staging Athenian tragedies in 'straight' translations became accepted in the early 20th century.⁶⁸ In just the past two decades, it has received new productions both in established venues—for example, at the ancient theatres in Epidauros (1997 and 2009) and Tindari in Sicily (2009), by the Royal Shakespeare Company production at London's Barbican Centre (1996), and at Boston's American Repertory Theatre (2007)—and in places that are off the beaten path, such as the Ohio Theater (2002) and the Riverside Theater (2009) in New York City, and San Francisco's Theater Pub (2010).

Moreover, dramatic adaptations outnumber other types of works inspired by this Euripidean tragedy, and plays constitute the earliest and most recent instances of reception. The earliest are two Athenian comedies also titled *Phoenician Women* by the Greek comic playwright Aristophanes (ca. 455–380 BC), famous for his paratragic appropriations from Euripides' tragedies, and by Aristophanes' competitor Strattis. Fragments of both comedies, featuring playful recontextualizations of verses culled from Euripides' drama, have survived. It seems likely that these comedies were performed in the Theater of Dionysus within a decade or so of the original staging of the Euripidean *Phoenician Women*.⁶⁹ The most recent dramatic adaptations are Liz Lochhead's *Thebans*, first performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2003, Steven Gridley's serio-comic *Post-Oedipus*, originally staged in New York City in 2004, and Martin Crimp's *The Rest Will Be Familiar to You from Cinema* (after

66 On Graham's debts to other Euripidean plays, see above, pp. 75; 127–8, and below, pp. 414–5; 484.

67 We have no direct evidence for revival performances of *Phoenician Women* in antiquity. But, given the frequency with which other Euripidean tragedies were revived on stage (Katsouris [1974]; Kuch [1978]), it seems highly probable that *Phoenician Women* was restaged during the 4th century BC and later.

68 Papadopoulou (2008) 120–4 and 155–6 documents several revivals in Greece during the 20th century.

69 Orth (2009) 208.

Euripides' Phoenician Women), which debuted in November 2013 at Hamburg's Deutsches Schauspielhaus in a German translation by Ulrika Syha under the title *Alles weitere kennen Sie aus dem Kino*.⁷⁰

As it synthesizes material from different Athenian tragedies concerned with Thebes' misfortunes, Liz Lochhead's *Thebans* mirrors the approaches to adapting *Phoenician Women* taken in the *Antigone* plays of Robert Garnier and Jean Rotrou, and also in Seneca's *Phoenician Women* and Statius' *Thebaid*. The first part of *Thebans*, titled "Oedipus," is indebted to Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*; the second part, "Jokasta/Antigone," joins the plots of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and Sophocles' *Antigone*. The subplot centered on Ares' demand for a sacrifice is omitted, thus eliminating the character of Menoeceus. Oedipus wanders into exile at the end of Part 1 and plays no role in Part 2; there is never any reference to the father's curse on his sons. The presence of Haemon and Ismene smoothes the transition in "Jokasta/Antigone" between the material derived from *Phoenician Women* and *Antigone*. Taking over the role of Euripides' first messenger, Haemon reports the news of the impending single combat to Jocasta. Ismene is the recipient of Creon's report of the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices and Jocasta's suicide, which culminates in the new sovereign's edict forbidding funerary rites for Polyneices.⁷¹

Various features of the 2003 Edinburgh production encouraged spectators to conceive of the action of the play as taking place in the present. Not only was the dress of all the characters modern, but the chorus also entered at the beginning of Part 1 with white hospital masks, a common precaution against

70 It should be noted that the fruitful period from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment produced several tragedies that derived inspiration from Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and other ancient treatments of the Thebaid myth, e.g.: Lodovico Dolce's *Giocasta* (1549) and its English adaptation, *Jocasta*, by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe (1566); Robert Garnier's *Antigone, ou la piété* (1580); Jean Robelin's *La Thébaïde* (1584); Jean Rotrou's *Antigone* (1637); Jean Racine's *La Thébaïde, ou les frères ennemis* (1664) and its free adaptation into English by Jane Robe under the title *The Fatal Legacy* (1723); and Vittorio Alfieri's *Polinice* (1775, published with revisions in 1783). For scholarship on these works, see below, p. 314. Papadopoulou (2008) 117–20 lists other dramas from this period with ties to Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, such as Giambattista della Porta's comedy *Gli duoi fratelli rivali* [*The Two Rival Brothers*] (1601), William Mason's *Elfrida* (1772), also discussed by Hall/Macintosh (2005) 191, and Friedrich Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina* ("The Bride of Messina") (1803).

71 Cf. the fifth acts of Racine's *La Thébaïde* and Robe's *The Fatal Legacy*. Several features of *Thebans*, such as the emphasis on Haemon and Antigone's romance and the elimination of references to Oedipus' curse, recall the adaptations of *Phoenician Women* by the French dramatists, in particular Rotrou and Racine.

the transmission of SARS during the epidemic of 2002–2003.⁷² In the play's opening minutes, images of Greek statues were interspersed with pictures of the recently deposed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein on a screen at the back of the stage.⁷³ Lochhead's regular use of Scottish words, such as "bairn" for "baby," seems aimed at making her Scottish audiences feel even greater investment in the play's action.⁷⁴ Omnipresent in Lochhead's play is the chorus of Thebans, who have a far more intimate relationship to the horrors unfolding around them than does Euripides' chorus of foreign women.⁷⁵ The trauma suffered by the city's inhabitants, as the discovery of Oedipus' parricide and incest are followed by civil war and fratricide and the execution of Antigone, never drop out of sight: "what will happen to us all/ to our prayers and our hopes?," the Thebans ask in terror after Eteocles has given Creon his final instructions.⁷⁶ As the Thebans are vulnerable to the consequences of the actions taken by the powerful men who lead their city, so too are the female members of the royal household. The exposition in the prologue of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, as adapted in the opening of Part 2, gives Jocasta the chance to recount in disturbing terms first the marital rape that she endured nightly from "old man Laius," whom she was forced to marry when she was "hardly older than a child," and then the day when her "bairn" was torn away from her breast.⁷⁷ The vivid image she later conjures of being "torn in two" by her sons' vituperative exchange forges an unsettling link between the young men's verbal violence and the sexual violation perpetrated by their grandfather.⁷⁸

With no curse hanging over their heads, Lochhead's Eteocles and Polyneices have only themselves to blame for the disasters they bring to their family and city. More generally, *Thebans* uses the story of Oedipus' family to explore how the selfish manipulations of powerful men, today as in antiquity, shatter the lives of multitudes. But the play also suggests that such manipulations would not be possible without the complicity of others. Victim though she is of

72 Lee (2003); cf. Hardwick (2003), who supplies detailed information about the 2003 staging of *Thebans* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

73 Lee (2003).

74 Corbett (2013) 78.

75 Lochhead's chorus finds precedents in the choruses of Theban women in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, and also in Dolce's *Giocasta* and Gascoigne and Kinwelmersche's *Jocasta*. Miola (2002) 35–6 notes that the "revised choruses" in the Italian and English adaptations of *Phoenician Women* "speak not as outsiders, but as victims"; the same can be said of Lochhead's Thebans.

76 Lochhead (2003) 50.

77 Lochhead (2003) 32–3.

78 Lochhead (2003) 48.

Laius' violence, Jocasta is also the beneficiary of great privilege; when she first appears in Part 1, the confident queen revels in her loving relationship with her "darling" young husband.⁷⁹ Sharpening the edge of Lochhead's interrogation of power and responsibility is the fact that the Thebans themselves come to accept blame for the disasters suffered by their city. Their acknowledgement perhaps invites spectators to reflect on their own complicity in the crises of our times. After learning that Eteocles and Polyneices will fight to the death, the chorus evokes the sown men, "two fated figures locked in combat," but immediately identifies these figures as "our Theban emblem."⁸⁰ And, although in his final speech Creon identifies himself as "the guilty one" who "killed the whole future," it is the Thebans who assume ultimate responsibility for the city's downfall in the play's conclusion: "when we should have spoken out we were silent/ kept our heads down . . . / cities stand so tall/ we live in them forgetting they can be broken."⁸¹

Martin Crimp's *The Rest Will Be Familiar to You from Cinema*⁸² adheres closely to the structure of *Phoenician Women*, retaining every episode and Euripides' entire cast of characters.⁸³ But the tone and content of Euripides' presentation are radically transformed, beginning with the setting—the "interior of a large decaying house"—and the role played by the chorus of the black-clad "Girls." The Girls literally dominate the action from beginning to end, as they hustle the other figures on and off stage, tell them what to say and how to say it, and impel them despite attempts at resistance toward the play's bloody conclusion. The play begins not with Jocasta's monologue—that is delivered in the second scene, under the close supervision of one of the Girls—but with the chorus's direct address to the audience, in which the Girls take turns firing off question after question, each as unsettlingly impossible to

79 In the Edinburgh production, Jocasta's elegant attire (a long black dress with a plunging neckline, and a jewelled necklace: see Hardwick [2003]) may have been designed to draw attention to her privileged position. Steven Gridley's *Post-Oedipus* presents a less subtly vain and self-absorbed Jocasta. See Gridley (2006) esp. 7–10 and 53–65; also Johnson (2010); Foley (2010) 149–50.

80 Lochhead (2003) 55. In the Edinburgh production, the same nine actors played the chorus and the principal characters (Hardwick [2003], Lee [2003]), perhaps facilitating the impression of the chorus' involvement in and responsibility for the action.

81 Lochhead (2003) 87–8.

82 I am deeply indebted to Mr. Crimp and his literary agent for sharing the unpublished German and English scripts of the play with me.

83 The title is derived from the chorus's description in Scene 6 of the slaying of Ares' serpent and the "birth" of the Sown Men from its teeth: "Kadmos . . . / pulped its head with a rock/ broke out its teeth/ . . . The rest will be familiar to some of you/ from cinema: soldiers/ break through the earth's crust/ . . . and start killing each other."

answer as the next. For example, "If Anna has 2 more ponies than Miriam, and Miriam's cat Bobby has 7 kittens, then what is it like to kill?" The Girls' connection to the enigmatic Sphinx is intimated straightaway, and subsequent choral addresses similarly pepper the audience with difficult, absurd, and often disturbing questions, culminating in play's final lines "What film do you endlessly project/ in the deserted cinema of my mind?"

Like *Thebans*, Crimp's play is unsparingly graphic in its vision of wartime atrocities, and, with its many anachronisms, it forces its audience to conceive of these atrocities as taking place in a present moment that is indeed familiar to us, and not just "from cinema."⁸⁴ The language is coarse, and the conduct of characters is often shocking and outrageous, such as Polyneices' "toxic political marriage" to a bride who is only eleven years old. Also like *Thebans*, *The Rest Will Be Familiar* . . . raises questions about its characters' behavior in ways that have implications for how spectators think about responsibility and causality in their own lives.

But the conceptual problems embedded in Crimp's handling of this ancient myth are far more perplexing. The continual manipulations of the Girls and their hold over the other characters, which are never explained or rationalized, gesture toward the utter powerlessness of human beings in the face of forces beyond their ken and control.⁸⁵ In scene 9, the terrified Menoeceus, envisioned as just "a small boy," is handed a butcher's knife by one of the Girls who tells him, "It's for you." In scenes 2 and 5, Jocasta's and Polyneices' efforts to reject the words put into their mouths and demonstrate that they are "in control" fall flat; in scene 11, after the mortally wounded messenger faints, a Girl compels Jocasta to narrate to herself the news of Menoeceus' sacrifice that the dying officer had been sent to deliver. What exactly the Girls represent, if they represent any single thing, is not clear. In scene 5, they coyly introduce themselves to Polyneices as "innocent Phoenician girls," but the subsequent dialogue undermines confidence in the reliability of the information they present about themselves.

As the Girls bark out "SAY IT!" over and over to Jocasta and others, insisting on fidelity to a script that we might vaguely recognize as the text of Euripides' tragedy, it is tempting to see in their impositions a metaphor for the sway exerted by authoritative narratives that—fatefully—shape assumptions about history and identity. Yet, though bullied by the Girls into doing terrible things, Crimp's characters appear to make the most vicious choices when left to their own devices. Before she is compelled to speak in scene 11, Jocasta repeatedly slaps the wounded officer in order to exact his tidings; according to another

84 Cf. Haydon (2013).

85 Cf. Seegers (2013) describes the world of Crimp's play as *ein Terrorstaat* ("a terrorist state").

officer's report in scene 12, she pummels the dying Eteocles before committing suicide. In scene 3, Antigone callously taunts her female minder about the sexual humiliation that attends her servile status; when she is reunited with her father in scene 14, her first reflex is, like her mother's, to punch and slap.

This tendency toward petulant violence can be put down to the bad habits of spoiled royals, which the members of Oedipus' family certainly are,⁸⁶ or to the constant duress inflicted by Girls. But Teiresias's paradoxical explanation to Creon that "every cell in your human civilised body is derived . . . from that smashed head" of Ares' serpent (scene 9) affords a more disturbing perspective, as it invites spectators to reflect that the disposition to cruelty and violence displayed on stage may be embedded in the genetic code of "human material" and in the fabric of human "civilisation." Opportunities seem to arise for characters to stray from the script, or (we might think) to resist the legacy of the dragon's smashed skull; the Girl who gives little Menoeceus the knife, for example, momentarily balks. But, under pressure from her peers, she "overcomes her reluctance" and ensures that Menoeceus plays his part by playing her own. Spectators are thus left to wonder what their own "human material" and their own scripts, derived from all that has become familiar "from cinema" and other authoritative narratives, might make them do.

Screen

To my knowledge, the only screen adaptation of *Phoenician Women* is *Jocasta*, written and directed by Elise Kermani, which won an award for the "Best Experimental Theater Film" at the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival in 2008. With a script partly based on Peter Burian and Brian Swann's translation,⁸⁷ the movie was filmed at the Shaker Great Stone Barn in New Lebanon, New York. It features four actors; *Jocasta*, *Antigone*, and the chorus are each played by female actors, whereas the same male actor plays *Polyneices*, *Eteocles*, *Oedipus* and also *Euripides* himself. In the opening scene, a young girl reads aloud the story of *Cadmus*' arrival in *Thebes*; her book contains an alien script, running from right to left, that transforms into English words as her finger passes over it. She tells not only of the killing of Ares' serpent and the birth of the sown men from the dragon's teeth, but also of *Cadmus*' invention of the alphabet, the letters of which are said to have sprung up, along with the warriors, from the dragon's teeth. Throughout, the film draws attention to the act of writing. Words frequently take shape, letter by letter, on the screen—for example, during the chorus's silent dance before the arrival of *Polyneices*, the words, "Oh gods, bring this mischief to an end/Make

86 Cf. Haydon (2013).

87 Burian/Swann (1992).

the sons of Oedipus agree again," appear in blood-red script on the stone walls beside her.⁸⁸ The action cuts at key moments to show Euripides writing his script on a laptop, surrounded by votive candles. With several compressions, the film moves through the episodes of *Phoenician Women* up until Eteocles' expulsion of Polyneices. The tearful farewell of Jocasta and Polyneices is interspersed with momentary glimpses of Euripides, plainly distressed by the events unfolding in his tragedy. After an animated sequence depicting the brothers' battle and deaths, Antigone silently washes and shrouds Polyneices' body; she then leads her father into exile, while (according to the subtitle) her mother "stays behind in Thebes."⁸⁹ The scene then shifts again to Euripides, pacing beside his laptop, while voices can be heard softly talking about the direction the action will take. "I'm struggling with this issue—do I kill off Jocasta?," asks the female voice, while the male voice repeats, "Sacrifice for renewal to begin," and then states, "Euripides is changing the notion of what the sacrifice should be." The playwright himself is then heard murmuring as he writes, "... something missing ... someone must sacrifice to save Thebes, but who must do this?"⁹⁰ The next scene, in which Jocasta squats by a fire, presents the answer. In a birthing ritual, she paints symbols on her limbs with ink, washes off the ink into a bowl of water, drinks the water and then spits it out into the fire, with the droplets and flames forming new symbols—a new language. The subsequent scene ("many years later," according to the subtitle) shows Jocasta serenely sitting on a loveseat in neatly mowed grass; as she silently gestures, written words appear to come out of her mouth: "Tell only ... until ..."⁹¹ Antigone returns with Oedipus and reunites her parents, and the pair waltz in each other's arms as the camera pans backwards, revealing the rest of the cast and the production crew. The movie ends with a child, perhaps the actor's own daughter, running into the waiting arms of the laughing Jocasta.

As in Crimp's play, the derelict setting of Kermani's film is suggestive of a past that has outlived its time and become dangerously decrepit. But, in contrast to the barren interior of *The Rest Will Be Familiar* ..., the crumbling stone barn that represents Thebes in *Jocasta* is overgrown by lush foliage that literally is new life springing up from old foundations. By arresting the tragic denouement of Euripides' plot and having the playwright substitute the creative 'sacrifice' of Jocasta for the blood-sacrifice of Menoeceus, Kermani crafts out of *Phoenician Women* a hopeful (if impressionistically conceived) vision of renewal, very different from most of the dramatic, artistic, and literary

88 Kermani (2008).

89 Kermani (2008).

90 Kermani (2008).

91 Kermani (2008).

adaptations of this sad and troubling play. Kermani's *Jocasta* cannot save her sons, but she keeps herself clear of the destructive swath of their hatred. Too often a mother, she nonetheless gives motherhood one more chance, giving birth this time to a language with which she can rewrite her family's story and bring her surviving loved ones safely home.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Phoenician Women*

Papadopoulou (2008) 104–24 provides an excellent chapter on the reception of the tragedy, in addition to a bibliography for further reading concerning reception (pp. 139–40) and a chronology that lists revival performances and adaptations (pp. 153–6). Of the works in Papadopoulou's bibliography, Beyerle (1973) stands out for its detailed discussions of several works influenced by Euripides' tragedy: Seneca's *Phoenician Women*, Statius' *Thebaid*, the *Antigone* tragedies by Garnier and Rotrou, Racine's *La Thébaïde*, and Alfieri's *Polinice*. Scholarship on the reception of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* in antiquity includes Bremer and Mastronarde (1982), as well as Beers (1914), Bremer (1983), Braund (1997), and Cribiori (2001). Two databases noted by Papadopoulou (p. 140) are indispensable resources for information about performances and dramatic adaptations: the Open University's Research Project on Texts and Images of Ancient Greece in Modern Literature (www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays), and the University of Oxford's Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama [APGRD] (www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk).

Also important for the study of the reception of *Phoenician Women* are Steiner (1984) and Duroux/Urdician (2010). Hall/Macintosh (2005) x, 8, 44, and 82–3, offer brief discussions of Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe's *Jocasta* and Robe's *The Fatal Legacy*.

Two notable examples of recent scholarship on Euripides' *Phoenician Women* as a work of reception in its own right are Lamari (2010) and Torrance (2013) 94–133.

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Suppliant Women

Rosanna Lauriola

"I would rather stand three times behind a shield in battle than give birth once"—Medea says in her despair and anguish, once she felt the threat either of being deprived of her children or of an incumbent danger to her children (Medea 250–1).¹ She would have preferred not to have had even one child, and would have found it far preferable to face herself situations that were unthinkable dangerous for a woman—unthinkably in men's eyes—such as fighting in battle in the first line. "I wish that old Time, father of days, had kept me unwed until this day! What need did I have of children? I thought I would have suffered too much had I never married and bore any children. But now I see very clearly my suffering, the loss of my dear children"—so the mothers from Argos say once they have lost their beloved sons in war, as they beg to be granted just the right to see them, embrace them for the last time, and give them a burial (Suppliants 788–92).² They too now seem to prefer never to have given birth, which is an unthinkable thing—unthinkable, once again, in a male-oriented culture. The hardship of motherhood is such that mothers reach the point of wishing not to have had children, no matter how different those mothers then turn out: a killer of her own children, Medea, and pitiful suppliants for their killed children's bodies, the women from Argos. The fear of losing her children, or the actual loss of them, seems to be the most intolerably sharp pain that a mother can experience, which leads her to desire to be childless, or to desire to die: "May I forget this pain in death" (Suppliants 86). Relying on an empathy that only mothers can feel, the suppliant women from Argos address their supplication first to a mother, Aethra, the mother of Theseus, king of Athens. They look for her outside Athens, and they reach her at Eleusis. Once they found her, they fall on their old knees and supplicate her right there, in the place sacred to Demeter—the archetype of motherly grieving for the loss of a child—at the spot of her final reunion with her child, an auspicious spot—one may think—for the success of the supplication. The motherly grief for the loss of children, which informs the supplication, parallels the cause of that loss, which charges that grief with a deeper nuance of everlasting resonance: the war. The

1 All translations, from any language into English, are mine, unless differently indicated in the footnotes.

2 Throughout the chapter I shall use the shorter title *Suppliants* when quoting specific lines.

mourned sons were warriors; they lost their life in one of the thousands of meaningless and foolish wars that men fight over and over again. Together with the wives, symbolized by Evadne, the fathers, represented by Iphis, and the children, appearing as the orphans of those warriors, these suppliant mothers embody the “forgotten warriors.”³ These are the ones who fight on the emotional front of the war and provide a vivid picture of the family destruction that war causes alongside the casualties on the battlefield. Motherly grief, with its family echo, and the ensuing criticism of war are the key features both of this Euripidean tragedy and of its re-elaborations, above all on the modern stage. The motif of the burial, which is the object of the mothers’ supplication and one of the main issues at stake, adds to the pitiful situations of these women. Not only are they victims of the atrocities of war because they have lost their sons, but they also are victims of the abuse of power. The enemy, Creon, king of Thebes, where the war occurred, arbitrarily and tyrannically denied them the restitution of the corpses, and thus their burial. Like Sophocles’ *Antigone*, these women fight for the right to have the bodies back and to properly bury them. But in contrast to *Antigone*, these women eventually find a champion: Theseus, king of Athens and the embodiment of an idealized democracy that stands and fights for the freedom and the rights of the oppressed. Along with the hardship of the “forgotten warriors,” the victimization by an abusive regime and the prompt aid offered by democracy let this tragedy find broad resonance in modern times, as shown by several works of reception.

In Literature

Sporadic references to the military expedition of the so-called Seven against Thebes can be easily found in the very first extant Greek epics, i.e., in the poems of Homer (ca. 8th century BC)⁴ and in the works of Hesiod (8th century BC).⁵ Likewise, the fear of being denied funeral rites, and the ensuing supplication either by the one who would be very likely killed (e.g., Hector in *Iliad* 22.

3 I borrow this poignant phrase from Matsakis (1988).

4 The most extensive reference to the expedition occurs in *Iliad* 4. 377–400, with an emphasis on Tydeus’ deeds. The event is also indirectly evoked through the references to Capaneus, another major character of the story who is inevitably mentioned in Euripides’ play as well. In Homer he is mostly referred to as “the father of Sthenelus” (e.g., *Iliad* 2. 564; 4. 367, 403; 5. 108, 241, 319), who in turn was one of the *Epigoni* (“descendants,” who later attacked again Thebes, to avenge their fathers: see, e.g., Apollodorus, *Library* 3.7.2–4). This means that an allusion to the whole story of the Argives’ ‘feud’ with the Thebans is present in the Homeric epic.

5 Namely in *Works and Days*, within the myth of the Five Races (ll. 158–63).

337–43) or by the relatives, mainly the women and in particular the mothers (e.g., Hecuba in *Iliad* 22. 82–9),⁶ are first recorded in Homer. To be denied funeral rites meant to be dishonorably left as prey for beasts, such an outrage that borders—even in our days—on an act of desecration. It is an action that speaks of cruelty and impiety, something that a dead person's relatives and friends cannot certainly let go. It also meant to keep the dead from finally resting in peace, forcing them to wander in a kind of *limbo*. And these meanings associated with the burial are to be found in the very early literary evidence as well.⁷

The unsuccessful assault of the seven champions of Argos, led by Polyneices, against Thebes, ruled by Eteocles, was narrated at length in the lost epic poem of an uncertain poet: the *Thebaid*. It traditionally dates around the 6th century BC and belongs to one of the so-called Epic cycles—the Theban cycle.⁸ Supposedly, this poem was the source on which Euripides would build his version. Some other references are to be found in the lyric poet Pindar (6th–5th century BC) with an emphasis on Adrastus, king of Argo and ally of Polyneices, who, in the Euripidean play, leads the suppliant women to Athens and delivers the request for help directly to Theseus. In the odes *Olympian* 6. 13–8 and *Nemean* 9. 18–24 Pindar hints at the eulogy that Adrastus delivered over the seven funeral pyres at Thebes.⁹ Neither in Pindar nor in the remains of the *Thebaid* is there anything that may suggest the denial of burial by the Thebans, and, in consequence, the involvement of Athens. These motifs—which constitute the frame of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*—might be among the playwrights' innovations to the traditional story. Indeed, before Euripides the story debuts on the stage with Aeschylus' lost tragedy *Men of Eleusis* (probably in the late 460s BC). Only two fragments survive (*fr.* 269, 270), one of which (*fr.* 269), referring to the condition of the dead as being already decaying, talks of an 'urgent matter', perhaps the matter of the burial.¹⁰ This fragment and the more extensive account *Life of Theseus* (29. 4–5) of the biographer and historian

6 In the Iliadic passage mentioned above, Hecuba is actually addressing her 'supplication' to her son Hector to persuade him not to face the incumbent duel with Achilles lest he be left unburied, unmourned, devoured by running dogs. As it is well known, it is Priam who will go to supplicate the enemy, Achilles, to return Hector's body so that they might properly grant him a burial (*Iliad* 24). In both cases the burial is the main concern.

7 See, e.g., *Iliad* 23. 69–98.

8 See, also, Storey (2008) 12.

9 Another reference to Adrastus can be found in Pindar, *Pythian* 8. 55–70: the expedition against Thebes is not explicitly mentioned, but can be implied.

10 For the fragments, see West (2003) 39–59. On this lost play, see Zunzt (1955) 22–3; Mills (1997) 229–32; Storey (2008) 13–5.

Plutarch (ca. 1st–early 2nd century AD) have so far led scholars to think that, perhaps, in Aeschylus' *Men of Eleusis* the main motifs of Euripides' *Suppliant Women* may have occurred for the first time, motifs such as: the prohibited burial, Adrastus' appeal to Theseus, and the intervention of the latter to support the Argives' request.¹¹ Some other information pertaining to this Aeschylean play rests in its title. It might refer to the chorus, which would be constituted by men, probably men from Athens supporting Adrastus' request. The gender and the provenience of the chorus thus mark some differences between the tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides. Furthermore, at least according to Plutarch's report, Theseus defeated the Thebans by winning them over with words and making a truce with them. Persuasion, to which Euripides' Theseus first—but vainly—turns (e.g., *Suppliants* 346–8), rather than force is the key to the success of Aeschylus' Theseus. While Euripides might be indebted to some extent to Aeschylus for the forbidden burial and the Athenian presence,¹² the use of force might thus be his own contribution to the tradition.¹³ The extreme resort to force, and therefore to another war, alongside the failure of a peaceful resolution, might be in line with the criticism of war, which is underscored throughout the whole tragedy.

Oh, unhappy mothers of unhappy warriors, how wildly pale fear penetrates my heart!... I fear the issue of the bitter conflict, where Pallas' army marches... What if massacres of battle, fighting, and the noise of beaten breast will again resound...? (Euripides, *Suppliants* 598–606)

The women utter this cry when Theseus, who has finally agreed to champion their request, moves to Thebes. This vividly expressed fear of war in the simple and genuine words of the disregarded victims of war, adds to, and brings to perfection, the visual representation of the criticism of war as conveyed by the mourning look and gestures of the women. Yet the tragedy has been handed on to the tradition as “an encomium of Athens”,¹⁴ which has had an impact on its

11 The other fragment of Aeschylus' lost tragedy (*fr.* 270) might indeed contain words directly spoken by Theseus suggesting his personal engagement in the burial service: cf. Euripides, *Suppliants* 758–68.

12 Regarding the date of Aeschylus' *Men of Eleusis*, see Gastaldi (1976); Storey (2008) 14–5.

13 A passage from the 5th-century BC historian Herodotus (2. 27) would contradict this: on the ongoing debate see Storey (2008) 15 and n. 5.

14 Το δὲ δῖον ἐγκώμιον Ἀθηναίων is the critical assessment given by the Ancients to the play as stated in the *Hypothesis* (i.e., the plot summary) of the tragedy: see Diggle (1981) 2; Kovacs (1998) 3.

reception through time as well. Certainly, the encomiastic tone and patriotic character are undeniable,¹⁵ and have managed to signal the representation of Athens as being the central issue of the tragedy. This would, however, be a reading from a merely Athenocentric viewpoint, which cannot do full justice to the complexities of the drama.¹⁶ Neither can a reading that emphasizes the echoes of contemporary historical events and situations,¹⁷ whether it focuses on the actual refusal by the Thebans to return to the Athenians the bodies of their soldiers who had died fighting against them in the battle of Delion (424 BC),¹⁸ or on resemblances between Theseus and historical figures of the time, namely Pericles and Alcibiades.¹⁹ Certainly, on most occasions in which Theseus has the floor, he speaks highly of the Athenian democracy in a way that reminds ancient and modern people of Pericles.²⁰ Theseus is the king of a democratic Athens, and Pericles, the founder of modern democracy, was an 'imperialistic monarch'. This is at least the picture of Pericles in the criticism of the most-known 5th-century BC comic playwright Aristophanes (e.g., *Acharnians* 641–2) and of his contemporary historian Thucydides, whose view of Athens as "*in name* a democracy, but *in fact* ruled by the first citizen" (2.65.9), has become the manifesto of Pericles' policy.²¹ As for Euripides' character of Theseus, the contradiction between the claim of democracy and his status as a king emerges above all in the second episode, i.e., in the *agon* between Theseus and the herald from Thebes (*Suppliants* 396–584). Their confrontation turns into a political debate which no one wins, and through which—one may reasonably suspect—the poet conducts a criticism of the current democratic government, disclosing its inconsistencies.²² But Euripides' Theseus is also the champion

15 See, e.g., Micheline (1994) 19–21; Mills (1997) 122; Kavoulaki (2008) 291–3.

16 For a concise overview on the different positions of the modern scholarship, see Kavoulaki (2008) 291 n. 2. For a more extensive discussion of the various critical assessments that scholars have so far attempted, see Storey (2008) 49, 67–70, 90–104.

17 With reference to this, a very detailed analysis is in Bowie (1997) 39–56.

18 See, Thucydides 4. 98–101. Regarding the possible connection with the Delion event and the broader question of the date of the tragedy, see Storey (2008) 23–8.

19 As to Pericles, see, e.g., Mills (1997) 97–104; for the connection with Alcibiades, see Micheline (1997).

20 Regarding this, a pioneer detailed analysis is in Goossens (1932).

21 Valuable contributions on Thucydides' view of Pericles are by Taylor (2009), and Foster (2010). For a similar view of Theseus, namely in Plutarch (*Life of Theseus* 25 vs. 35. 2–3), see Davies (1982).

22 For a detailed analysis of this passage, and for the ambiguity embodied by Theseus as being 'the king' of a democratic Athens, see also Storey (2008) 15, 41–2, 47–50. According to Gamble this would be in line with the ambivalence and contradictions that, to this

of the oppressed, a trait that will persist in the later reception of the play. His portrait as a protector of victims of the abuse of power, i.e., tyrants, is however consistent with, if not due to, the socio-political circumstance, that is, the emergence of democracy and the establishment of the Athenian Empire. Cleansed and purified from any questionable traits, Theseus becomes an ideological paradigm of moral nobility and justice, a model meant to exemplify Athens' prominence.²³ It is in the name of the state's prominence and of his own glory that, after a few initial hesitations, Theseus accepts and plays, to the very end, the role of the paladin of the Πανελλήνων νόμος ("the law of all Hellas": *Suppliants* 526–7). In refusing burial to the dead, Creon and Thebes are, in fact, not injuring and doing injustice to Argos only. "All Hellas,"—Theseus cries—"has a share of this, if someone deprives the dead of what is due to them, and keeps them away from the tomb" (ll. 538–40).²⁴ Hence θάψαι δίκαιῶν ("I think it is just to bury. . .," l. 526). This Theseus firmly states at the same time as he raises the question of the so-called 'just war'.²⁵ The justice of the suppliant women's cause often emerges throughout the play, beginning with their initial plea, "we have a legitimate cause" (l. 65). Theseus acknowledges it to the point that he does not justify Creon's edict, although he disapproves of the war against Thebes, carried out by Adrastus and the Seven, as unjust and fought out of hybris.²⁶ Paradoxically, as hinted at above, despite Theseus' intention to champion justice peacefully through persuasion, he eventually has to resort to the war, for it seems to be the only way to restore the law advocating for the suppliant women's cause (e.g., ll. 384–94, 525–7, 538–40, 560–3). His will be a mild war ('mild' as a war can be!); Theseus only wishes to have his legitimate request be satisfied (ll. 386–9) and to avoid a bloody massacre, once

scholar's mind, characterize the play itself: see Gamble (1970) esp. 399–401 with reference to the passage under discussion.

- 23 This is, in particular, the theory developed by Mills (1997). For a synthesis of the scholarly positions regarding Theseus character in this play, see, also, Storey (2008) 91–2, 102–4.
- 24 Inevitably Antigone, the champion *par excellence* of the burial-right, occurs to our mind. As pointed out by several scholars (see, e.g., Paduano [1986] 112–3), there are however some differences between the forces of action that drives Antigone and Theseus: the unwritten laws of god, the individual, and family rights (Antigone) turn into a collective, panhellenic law (Theseus).
- 25 See, e.g., Storey (2008) 25.
- 26 See, e.g., *Suppliants* 159–61, 229–33 (where Theseus reproaches Adrastus since he disregarded gods' will causing war with no regard for right and wrong); and 385–7 (where Theseus refers to his request to Creon to grant a burial to the bodies as 'a fair and just request').

he is forced to engage in the war. Indeed: “we have come for the bodies . . . wishing to bury them in observance of the universal law of Greece, without any desire to lengthen out the slaughter,” (ll. 670–2 cf. 724–5) clearly Theseus states in front of Creon. Yet, despite the insistence about resisting the compulsion to violence and having some restraint in combat,²⁷ what occurs is a bloody fight where—as the messenger reports—ἐκτείνον ἐκτείνοντο (“they killed and were killed”: l. 700). This is the cruel reality of the war: death, and thus tears and grief.

A criticism of war, ‘just’ though it can be, is apparent behind the praise of Athens for championing the oppressed through the figure of Theseus, and it is a poignant motif, perhaps unfairly overshadowed by the political propaganda of the Athenian democracy.²⁸ Although this tragedy has not been granted the same favor and popularity as, for instance, *Iphigenia at Aulis* or *Trojan Women*,²⁹ like them it is a tragedy about war, suffering in war, the grief of the survivors, and the pain of those who are ‘parted’ forever from their beloved because of war. Alongside the burial, and thus the mothers’ right to give, for the last time, motherly care to their dead warriors, what is at issue is not only justice but also peace, i.e., the end of situations that cause those sufferings.³⁰ The women acknowledge Athens’ reverence for justice and its promptness to assure protection to the afflicted (*Suppliants* 378–80); they pray to ‘the city of Pallas’ to help the mother, Aethra, to persuade her son to give them help (l. 377). But—as hinted at above—these women also fear that their quest for justice brings about another war, and thus more slaughter and massacre (ll. 598–606).³¹ The setting at Eleusis also conjures up the theme of peace. Demeter and Persephone, as commonly known, are goddesses associated with fertility, prosperity, new life and peace.³² Peace, in turn, has traditionally been

27 Cf., e.g., *Suppliants* 549–57, 722–30. Regarding this, see, also, Rehm (2002) 30–1.

28 A criticism of war is also explicitly delivered by the Theban herald within his criticism of Athenian democracy: see, e.g., *Suppliants* 470–93.

29 See, e.g., above, pp. 15–43; 44–99.

30 On the other hand, peace is traditionally associated with justice (and /or vice versa), as well testified to by Hesiod, *Works and Days* 225–37.

31 While emphasizing the continuity of the war-theme, Storey also identifies two segments, so to say, each of which characterizes each half of the play: (1) the excuse for war, i.e., when it is right to go to war, when legitimately a state should engage in a war for another state’s business; (2) the effects of war, mourning and sadness. As shown above, the effects of war, mourning and sadness, are actually present persistently since the beginning, while the question of the ‘just’ war explicitly appears only in the first half: Storey (2008) 62.

32 It has been noted that in the contemporary political life of Athens the cult of the two goddesses was associated with good relations between cities and peace: see Furley (1996) 39.

associated with prosperity/wealth and multitudes of children, thus fertility in any sense. The archaic poet Hesiod connotes peace as κοθρότροφος (“the nurse of children,” *Works and Days* 228), and the Theban herald of this tragedy praises peace as delighting in εὐπαιδία (“goodly race of children,” *Suppliants* 490) and πλοῦτος (“wealth,” l. 491). Like the aspiration for peace, which can be felt in some way throughout the play, so its frustration contributes to the criticism of war and possibly echoes contemporary situations. And the frustration is not simply implied by Theseus’ failure to persuade Creon peacefully to return the bodies. It is indeed decreed by the injunction of the warrior goddess and patroness of Athens, Athena. Appearing as *dea ex machina*, she enjoins a treaty between Athens and Argos, which still ‘speaks’ of war (ll. 1185–95), and, more importantly, predicts a new war when she says to the orphan sons of the dead warriors that they will sack Thebes (l. 1214).³³ Demeter and Persephone, i.e., the initial peace, or, better say, the aspiration for peace, are replaced by Athena, i.e., the war, which is vividly evoked in its cruelty in such an emphatic section of the play as the *finale*. “This evil”—sadly, the mothers say—“does not yet go to sleep” (l. 1147).³⁴ What is left is pain and distress (1157–8).

As hinted at above, the tears of the mothers, such a vivid representation of the disastrous effects of war, and the ‘laceration’ of the family—parents that become childless, wives that become widow, children that become orphans—are the texture of this tragedy.³⁵ It is not one man only, a victim both of war and of the abuse of power, who is mourned by one woman, precisely a sister, as in the case of Antigone;³⁶ it is a mass of victims whose mourning is a shared pain of such a universal category as motherhood:

A broader comment on the Eleusis setting is in Storey (2008) 18–20. A different opinion concerning the Eleusis setting is offered by Kavoulaki (2008) 292–3: this setting would rather highlight the ‘Panhellenic’ theme, considering that (a) the temple was located at the periphery of Attica, thus close to the borders with the Peloponnese, and (b) the feast implied in lines 27–8 had as main feature a sacrifice offered by the Athenians on behalf of all Greeks.

- 33 The goddess clearly hints at the so-called expedition against Thebes of the *Epigoni* (see, also, above, n. 4.) The unexpected intervention of Athena, and her unexpected demands have been one of the major objects of discussion with reference to this play. For a detailed comment and synthesis of the related scholarship, see Storey (2008) 80–5.
- 34 By these words the women comment on the plan of revenge, which has just been announced by the sons of the fallen warriors (*Suppliants* 1143–7).
- 35 For an overview on the role of the mothers throughout the play, see Kavoulaki (2008) esp. 297–8, 308.
- 36 See, also, above, n. 24.

No longer a happy mother, no more a mother blessed with children,
nor do I share the happiness of the Argive women who have children.
nor any more will Artemis, helper of childbirth, kindly greet these child-
less mothers.

...

To seven sons, the noblest among the Argives, we seven unhappy
mothers once gave birth; but now with no child, with no son
I grow old in deep misery, counting myself neither among the dead nor
the living

...

Tears are left for me. In my house lie sad memories of my son. . .
And when I wake to grief, I wet the folds of my robe upon my breast,
drenched with tears. (Euripides, *Suppliants* 955–79)

This choral lamentation on destroyed motherhood might be seen as the manifesto of this play, an anti-war manifesto of universal relevance.³⁷ The choral affliction is intensified by the exacerbated pain of an individual, a woman herself who has experienced a loss because of the war. She is not a mother, she is a wife: Evadne, the spouse of Capaneus, well-known for his bold challenge to Zeus, and accordingly punished by Zeus with his thunderbolt.³⁸ Capaneus' arrogance is, however, sanitized, if not completely dismissed, for a separate tomb is prepared for him: a pyre. In line with the current belief that the thunderbolt was a sacred signal and message from the gods, by exploiting the ambiguity of being hit by a thunderbolt, as being punished and yet sanctified by the god,³⁹ Euripides makes a significant innovation in the tradition pertaining to Capaneus. He turns Capaneus from a blasphemer into a *ἱερὸς νεκρός* ("sacred body/cadaver," *Suppliants* 935); therefore, a peculiar treatment is needed. A feeling of uneasiness might arise at the choice of a loving wife, Evadne, to die with, and for the love of, this violent and arrogant man. Yet his being singled out and sanctified might function to emphasize the gesture of Evadne,

37 Significantly, in Aristophanes' *Women at the Parliament* (230–5), in Praxagoras' peroration of the women's request for the civic authority and leadership, one of the women's strengths that she highlights is, in fact, their being mothers and their effort, as such, to spare "the blood of our soldiers" (ll. 232–3).

38 On Capaneus' death by Zeus' thunderbolt, see Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 423–46; Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 1172–86. In Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, there are several allusive references to Capaneus' death, struck by Zeus: regarding this, see Storey (2008) 73.

39 See Frazer (1921) 1: 375–8 and n. 3; Così (1987) esp. 219–20.

which in turn would intensify the gloom and anguish of the aftermath of the war.⁴⁰ Briefly appearing on the stage (*Suppliants* 990–1071), in her exchange with the chorus and her hopeless father Iphis, Evadne reveals her decision to share with her husband the bright flame of the pyre and the same tomb. She wishes to be rid of her *drained* life, to mix her ashes with her husband's, so that she may continue to lie side by side with him "in Persephone's bride-chamber" (l. 1021).⁴¹ Evadne's leap into the fire, i.e., her refusal of a life now empty because she is deprived of her beloved, is certainly commendable. Her suicide, however, leaves us with heartbreak, a sense of anguish and solitude rather than with a beatifying exemplarity, as is the case with the other Euripidean heroine who chooses death for love: Alcestis.⁴² The sadness and hopelessness surrounding Evadne's scene conjures up the main atmosphere and message of the play: hers is not a *coup de theater* ("sensational action"); it serves as a foil to the mourning stance of the mothers.⁴³ Her death before the crowd and before our eyes makes palpable the grief of war; the waste of death that war brings up becomes visible, real.⁴⁴ Until Evadne's self-immolation, the unburied corpses of the Argive men—invisible evidence of the cruelty of war—dominate the play; their burial is supplicated for, debated and fought over, and eventually it is achieved. Yet the painful consequences of war are *only* heard through the tears of the mothers. Now, with Evadne, they are almost tangibly *in fieri* and fully becoming true. Furthermore, Evadne's scene allows another key figure to

40 For a synthesis of the different views about Evadne's scene, see Storey (2008) 73–77. As pointed out above, in my eyes, the scene is functional to emphasizing the destructive effects of the war, first on a family, then, and in subsequence, on a whole community.

41 The motif of 'the bride of death' is a recurrent one in ancient Greek culture. As is well-known, it refers to women who, for the sake of love, sacrifice their life, joining themselves to death forever. The divine archetype is Persephone who, not accidentally, is evoked by Evadne in her last words (*Suppliants* 1022). On this motif, see Rehm (1994). It has also been noted that Evadne's kind of suicide, i.e., on her husband's pyre, evokes a ritual Hindu practice, named *Sati* or *Anumarana*, i.e., a ritual self-immolation by a Hindu widow on her husband's pyre to demonstrate her everlasting devotion to him: Scarpi (2001) 569; cf., also, Sharma (1998). Human sacrifices on the occasion of funerals were not unknown to the Greeks: while in historical time they did not practice them, in the Mycenaean Age they might have occurred as the funeral of Patroclus in the *Iliad* (23. 173–6) would demonstrate. Evadne's gesture might be traced back to a myth of Mycenaean origin and might testify to the funeral rites of that Age: see Nilsson (1932) 117–8.

42 For a concise comparison between Evadne and Alcestis, highlighting some analogies and differences, see Paduano (1986) 253–5.

43 See Kanoulaki (2008) 308–9.

44 See Rehm (1992) 129–30.

enter the drama of the war: the fathers, represented by her own father, Iphis (*Suppliants* 1031–1113). The war has already wasted a son of his. Indeed, Iphis is there for the same reason as the mother: to bury his dead. That same war now kills the only other remaining child. Iphis stands for the male counterpart of the ‘forgotten, invisible warriors’. In front of his loss, he, too, wishes not to have had children (ll. 1087–91). And to complete the picture of the devastating effects of the war, the children of the warriors, now orphans as well, appear at the end (ll. 1123–64).⁴⁵ War does not spare anyone. What is left is death and grief over death. Devastation and desolation are the feelings that seal the tragedy, in spite of Athena’s promise of glory and victory for the descents.

Despite the potential resonance that the issue of war and the sufferings of war could enhance, this tragedy has not had the same influence and impact on the inspiration of later artists as some other Euripidean tragedies, whether they are ‘war-related’ plays or not. The little reception that we can track for this drama is confined either to some key characters, *in primis* Evadne and, with her, Capaneus; or to the major themes, such as mourning, the polemical expression of the crude reality of war, and the ‘nature’ of democracy. Each of the few works of reception, in fact, mostly singles out one item. In other words, there is not a tragedy, a novel, or a poem that re-elaborates the *Suppliant Women* as a whole.⁴⁶

After Euripides, namely in the 4th century BC, Greek oratory became the privileged literary field of reception of the ‘political’ theme of *Suppliant Women*. The figure of Theseus and the story of his intervention upon the request of the suppliants are reused by the 4th-century-orators to put Athens and its idealistic government in the best light, to emphasize its respect for justice and its standing up for a Panhellenic war.⁴⁷

45 It is my opinion that the appearance of the orphans might be instrumental to the crude picture of the consequences of a war. I do not, however, exclude other views, such as Rehm’s (1992) 131. According to this scholar the scene should be considered as a reference to one of the ceremonies that preceded the tragic performances at the City Dionysia, i.e., the procession of the orphan sons of Athenians who had died in battle; when they reached the age of eighteen, they marched through the orchestra, dressed in hoplite armor: regarding this see, also, Stroud (1971). On this ceremony and its possible influence on Euripides, see, also, above, p. 49 n. 19.

46 With the exception of a few modern stage-productions (see below, pp. 338–44), and of Statius’ poem *Thebaid*, for which see below, p. 334

47 All the three major orators of the 5th–4th-century BC Athens, Lysias, Isocrates and Demosthenes, in fact, mention Athens’ intervention in the matter of the Seven, as part of the illustrious past of the polis: see Storey (2008) 121–4. Concerning the role of Athens in matter of supplication, see also below, p. 585.

Between the end of the 4th century and the first half of the 3rd century BC, the first Greek grammarian-poet, Antimachus of Colophon, wrote an epic poem entitled *Thebaid*, which pertained to the myths of the Theban Cycle, specifically centering on the expedition of the Seven against Thebes.⁴⁸ This poem has not survived entirely, and the number of fragments that remain is not enough to establish the extension of the mythological content of this poem with any degree of certainty. Furthermore, the fragmentary status does not allow its sources to be firmly established, i.e., to which degree it is in debt either to Aeschylus or to Euripides.⁴⁹ This makes also difficult to accept with certainty that Antimachus' *Thebaid* is the source of a later Latin epic poem about the expedition of the Seven and its aftermath, including the refusal of the burial, the women's supplication and Theseus' intervention, i.e., the core themes of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. This Latin poem is the *Thebaid* by the Roman poet Statius (1st century AD).⁵⁰

Statius' twelve-year composition (*Thebaid* 12. 811–2) can be regarded as a remake of different Greek tragedies covering the expedition of the Seven and its consequences into the epic form, mostly modeled on Virgil's *Aeneid*.⁵¹ Beside Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and *Suppliant Women* provide the ground of Statius re-elaboration.⁵² Consisting of twelve books, the poem articulates its plot into two halves.⁵³ The first half covers the events leading to the fratricidal war, from Oedipus' curse to Eteocles' refusal to yield the throne to his brother; the second one pertains to the war itself, the duel between the two brothers, their mutual killing, and the final outcomes. It is the twelfth book that re-enacts Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, re-proposing, with some innovations, the story of the Argives' supplication and the ensuing intervention of Theseus.⁵⁴

48 The analysis here of Antimachus' fragments pertaining to the *Thebaid* is based on Matthews (1996) 66–206. On this poem, also above, p. 299.

49 To the widespread opinion according to which Antimachus' *Thebaid* would include the story of the Epigoni's expedition, recently Matthews (see above, n. 48) opposes the conclusion that it actually does not go beyond the expedition of the Seven.

50 See, e.g., Vessey (1970); Venini (1972).

51 See, e.g., Ganiban (2007).

52 As for Statius' reception of Euripides' *Phoenician Women* see, above, pp. 300–2. An overview of the influence and echoes of Greek tragedy in Statius' *Thebaid* is in Marinis (2015).

53 For a detailed analysis of the structural organization of Statius' poem, see Vessey (1973) 317–28.

54 Legras (1905) 139–40 refers to Euripides' play as the source of this final book of Statius' poem, with an emphasis on Evadne's episode.

After the mutual killing of Polyneices and Eteocles, and the suicide of Jokasta (*Thebaid* 11. 403–579), Creon takes the throne and begins his reign by banishing Oedipus and forbidding the Argives' burial (*Thebaid* 11. 580–761), while the Thebans start collecting their dead (*Thebaid* 12. 1–104). After the funeral of Creon's son Menoeceus, the scene shifts to the mourning of the Argive women. Once they come to know Creon's decree forbidding the burial of their dead, they decide to go to Athens to beg Theseus for help. One of them, Adrastus' daughter and the wife of Polyneices, i.e., Argia, goes instead to Thebes. The narration at this point splits between the Argive women at Athens, and Argia at Thebes. Here, together with Antigone, Argia defies Creon's decree by performing a burial over her husband's corpse (*Thebaid* 12. 105–463). In Athens Evadne, as representative, and on behalf, of all the Argive women, supplicates Theseus, who agrees to help them without any hesitation. He marches to Thebes, faces Creon directly in combat, and kills him. Hence Theseus allows the burial of all the dead, on both sides, thus restoring pity, justice, and order. The women run on the battlefield to mourn their dead, and the poem ends with the pyres and the women's laments (*Thebaid* 12. 464–819). The remake of Statius is first characterized by a 'compression' of Euripides' play into about three hundred lines, or a few more:⁵⁵ the number of the characters is reduced (Adrastus, Aethra, the Theban herald, and the messenger do not appear), and so are the dialogues. The poet seems to aim straight at the conclusion: Theseus promptly responds to the supplication, while in Euripides he first is reluctant; his positive reaction slowly matures throughout the dialogue both with Adrastus and, above all, with his mother. In Statius dialogues and discussions are replaced by a supplication that has an immediate effect. What in Euripides was the arrival point and outcome of a slow development, in Statius becomes the starting point: Theseus' commitment to restore a violated universal right, thus acting as a just and *clement* king *versus* tyrannical, abusive power. One of main effects—if not the main one—of Statius' adaptation is the metamorphosis of Theseus into a Roman king by placing him within the contemporary political discourse pertaining to the nature and features of imperial power. Re-proposing the opposition between Athens and Thebes in terms that resonate with his contemporary socio-political context in Rome, Statius turns Euripides' confrontation of democracy (= Athens) with tyranny (= Thebes) into a confrontation between king (Theseus) and tyrant (Creon), or, better, between *clementia* and *inclementia regum* ("clemency" and "mercilessness of kings/rulers;" see, e.g., *Thebaid* 11. 684). *Clementia*—in line with Seneca's trea-

55 This analysis is based on Bessone (2008), whose work focuses above all on the reception and adaptation of the figure of Euripides' Theseus in Statius' *Thebaid* 12.

tise *De clementia* ("On mercy")⁵⁶—is the cornerstone of the ideology of the Roman Empire by Statius' time. It is the dividing line between a good ruler and a despotic, tyrannical one. Clemency is what may assure devotion and consent to the emperor and, thus, guarantee safety to the state. Statius' Theseus embodies this virtue; he is the Roman ideal good ruler.⁵⁷ Not accidentally the Argive women who went to Athens to ask Theseus' help gather at the *Ara Clementiae* ("Altar of Clemency"),⁵⁸ which replaces Demeter's temple at Eleusis, i.e., the scene of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. This association of Theseus with the current ideology justifies, in a way, the final outcome of the murder of Creon, which constitutes another novelty compared to the Euripidean model. Justice replaces injustice, thus restoring peace and harmony. Statius' *Thebaid* ends with the triumph of virtue, i.e., moderation and clemency, over sin and arrogance.⁵⁹ Through Theseus the poet portrays the model of a just and clement king, perhaps offering this model to the current ruler. This also explains why Statius seals his poem with material that, out of the Greek tragedies that he uses as sources, comes specifically from Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. The supplication, in fact, sets in motion the events that bring the confrontation between good ruler and tyrant, i.e., in 'Roman' terms, between *clementia* and *inclementia*. If considered within the frame of the current political debate, this conclusion proves to be the culmination of the poem rather than a postscript, as it has often been seen on the argument that everyone would expect the poem to end right after the climatic personal combat and mutual killing of the two brothers. Under the mythological attire of Theseus, Athens, and Thebes, the poem and, in particular, its ending, resonate, in fact, with the Roman reality of Statius' days.⁶⁰

56 Indeed, this work by Seneca proves to be essential for understanding Statius' adaptation of the figure of Theseus in the conclusion of his poem: see, also, Vessey (1973) 311.

57 See, e.g., Seneca, *De clementia* 1.3.2; 1.5.4; 1.11.4. On this topic, see Vessey (1973) 311–2; Bessone (2008); also, above, pp. 56–7.

58 See *Thebaid* 12. 481–518. On the presence of the *Ara Clementiae* in Statius, see, also, Baier (2007).

59 Vessey (1973) 316 notes that concluding the story with the mutual killing of Oedipus' sons, the ascension to power of Creon, and the successful realization of his edict, would have meant making the *Thebaid* "a statement of despairing nihilism". This scholar offers an optimistic reading of the poem, as a work of redemption and triumph of the good. Statius re-used and appropriated Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, in the twelfth book of his poem, to sanction his message of hope that promoted the Senecan figure of the 'good king' (on which, also, above (esp., p. 56 with n. 47). On the opposite side is the pessimistic reading of Markus (2004).

60 See, e.g., Dominik (1990; 1994a).

Statius' adaptation of Euripides' play, however, is not confined to the poet's reuse of the figure of Theseus in line with his contemporary historical-cultural context. There is another tragic dimension of *Thebaid*—and, in particular, of book 12—that can be analyzed in terms of reception, a dimension for which Statius is peculiarly in debt to Euripides. I am referring to the space afforded to female characters, first throughout the poem through the lamentations of mothers who lose their beloved;⁶¹ then, perhaps foremost, in the conclusion, where specifically the suppliant women from Argos appear fully.⁶² Everywhere, true to the Greek Euripidean play, they provide an alternative perspective to the masculine world of war: it is the perspective of the effects of war on people who have survived, the women *in primis*; it is the perspective of the world of grief and lamentation that fill the void after the war is over. While in the first eleven books the poet grants space to the mothers of the warriors, in the last book he replaces the mothers with the wives: the Argive suppliant women are not the mothers of the Seven, as in Euripides; they are the wives. And, as has been seen, a wife, *Capaneia coniux* ("the spouse of Capaneus," *Thebaid* 12. 544), is the one who pleads for their cause.⁶³ The wife of the most impious of the Argive warriors confronts the most pious of kings—a device that probably serves to emphasize still further the clemency of Theseus. In Statius, too, Evadne commits suicide by throwing herself out of her husband's pyre, seeking "the thunderbolt in his great chest" (*Thebaid* 12. 802).

In particular through Statius' *Thebaid* 12, the story of the suppliant women from Argos and the 'championship' of Theseus passes into the Middle Ages and Renaissance. One of the most influential adaptations is the epic poem *Teseida delle Nozze d'Emilia* ("The Theseid of the Nuptials of Emily") by the Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio (ca. 1340–1341).⁶⁴ The poem is rather about the rivalry for the love of a woman, Emilia, between two Thebans whom Theseus has made prisoners during his expedition to Thebes to recover the dead bodies of the Argive men. The plot of Euripides' play and Statius' *Thebaid* 12 is condensed, with some innovations, in the second of the twelve books of Boccaccio's poem. In this second book, in fact, some space is afforded to the supplication of the

61 See, e.g., Micozzi (1998); Markus (2004).

62 See Dietrick (1999). The presence of female figures throughout Statius' poem, and in particular in the last book, is so conspicuous that it appealed to the satiric spirit of the contemporaneous Juvenal, who effeminized the *Thebaid* in *Satire* 7. 82–3: see, e.g., Markus (2000) 171–5.

63 Significantly Evadne's speech is the longest in the poem. For a structural and rhetorical analysis of her speech, see Dominik (1994b) 87–8.

64 The analysis above is based on Storey (2008) 131–2; and Harst (2010) 613.

women from Argos who—as in Euripides and Statius—went to Theseus to ask his help to bury their dead. Like in Statius, the women perform their request at the temple of *Clementia*, and Evadne speaks for all of them. Differently from Euripides and Statius, these women are not exclusively the mothers or the wives of the warriors; they are their ‘women’, whether mothers, or wives, or daughters, or sisters. They more actively participate in the action. It is the women, not Theseus (as in Euripides), who prepare the recovered bodies for the cremation; and it is they, not their sons (the *Epigoni*), who execute revenge by burning Thebes, after Theseus simply hands the city to them. Boccaccio’s *Teseida* in turn inspired the well-known English poet Geoffrey Chaucer, when he wrote the poem *The Knight’s Tale* (ca. 1380), which constitutes the first of the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer’s poem is but a shorter version of Boccaccio’s *Teseida*. Differently from Boccaccio, however, and rather in the footstep of Statius, the women are specifically the wives of the Seven.

Some traces of the story of Euripides’ play and Statius’ *Thebaid* 12, as they both have been re-elaborated by Boccaccio and Chaucer, can be finally found in the drama *The Two Noble Kinsmen* attributed to John Fletcher and William Shakespeare (ca. 1613–1614). Mostly seen as an adaptation of Chaucer’s tale, the original basic theme of women begging Theseus’ help for recovering and burying their dead, and moving against the will of an abusive ruler, retains only a very peripheral space, with a reduction even of the number of the women. They are just three queens whose husbands have been killed by the tyrant Creon.

Thereafter, the story of the suppliant women as a whole has had very little influence. As said, beside Theseus, one figure of Euripides’ play that has been re-used in literary works from antiquity to modern time is Evadne. Before and in addition to her appearance in Statius, the suicide of the *Capaneia coniux* is often mentioned by the poets of the Augustan period as a proof of love and an example of loyalty.⁶⁵ She is “the pride of Argive *fides* (faithfulness)” in the poet Properce (*Ode* 1. 15. 21–2); a woman of virtue and of marital devotion in Ovid (e.g., *Ars Amatoria* [“The Art of Love”] 3. 21–2); and an example for one’s own wife, still in Ovid (*Epistulae Ex Ponto* [“Letters from the Black Sea”] 3.1. 111–2).

From Late antiquity to our days there are not significant literary remakes of the figure and great action of Evadne,⁶⁶ while some more appearances,

65 For a concise survey of the presence of Evadne in antiquity, both in poetry and prose, see Storey (2008) 124–30.

66 Indeed, for instance, in Reid (1993, 1) the entry ‘Evadne’ is confined to a short mention of an homonymous mythic character, i.e., the daughter of Poseidon (see Pindar, *Olympian* 6. 28–70). Some useful, though exiguous, indications in terms of reception can be found in Reid under the entry ‘Seven against Thebes’: see Reid (1993) 11: 989–92.

though sporadically, of Capaneus can be found, with Statius' *Thebaid* serving as a bridge between the original Greek play and the subsequent modern reception. Regarding this, *Inferno XIV* 42–75 in *Divina Commedia* ("Divine Comedy") by the Middle-Ages best known Italian poet Dante, and *Paradise Lost* 1. 97–111; 4. 518–20 by the 17th-century English poet John Milton, are worth considering. While Dante locates Capaneus among the blasphemers, and keeps him as such in the hell,⁶⁷ Milton presents Capaneus at Thebes as an analogue of Satan: the latter's arrogance recalls the mythical personage's hybris.⁶⁸

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

As in literature so in the field of the fine arts, this tragedy of Euripides has had little influence. In the visual arts, as far as I could ascertain, there is one only representation of a scene that might be traced back to the story of the Argive supplication for the burial of the corpses of those who fell at Thebes, such a scene that would recall the tragedy as a whole. A few more representations are, instead, available for some single key-characters, such as Evadne and Capaneus.⁶⁹

The scene that would be related to the tragedy as a whole is painted on one side of a vase from the mid-5th century BC, well-known as "the Spina volute krater". It is attributed to a pupil of the Niobid painter and has usually been considered to be a *pendant* to another vase painting, a *calyx-krater* ("wine bowl") known as "Louvre Krater" and ascribed to the Niobid painter himself. This krater is the masterpiece of the Athenian potter in the red figures style, who is called the 'Niobid painter' after the scene he painted on the one side of vase, i.e., the killing of Niobe's children by Artemis and Apollo, whereas the other side's scene arguably represents Heracles and the Argonauts.⁷⁰ For a long time the "Spina volute krater," as a *pendant*, has actually been thought to belong

67 Regarding Dante's Capaneus, Reid (1993) 11: 991 signals a watercolor drawing, entitled "Capaneus the blasphemer," by William Blake (1757–1827), which illustrates *Inferno XIV*, 46–72 and is part of a series of illustrations to Dante's *Divina Comedia*. It is now displayed in the National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne, Australia).

68 On Capaneus both in Dante and in Milton, see Samuel (1966) 82–4. Dante's passage later inspired the 18th-century American poet Arthur Upson, who wrote a short poem entitled *Capaneus*, with a subtitle that clearly recalls Dante (*Inferno, Canto XIV*). This poem is part of Upson's collection *The Tides of Springs and Other Poems*, published in 1909.

69 As for Capaneus in particular, see, e.g., Kraus Koff (1990).

70 My discussion is based on Simon (1963) esp. 54–7. Cf. also Storey (2008) 14.

to the same mythical cycle. Since the time of its discovery in 1928, in fact, its scenes have been interpreted as dealing with the Argonauts. Starting from the '60s, a different analysis and interpretation have been provided, and they represent today the canonical reading of the vase painting. The analysis of one side of the "Spina volute krater" has revealed the presence of features that all point to the myth of the arrival of the Argive suppliants to Athens. These features include: a crowd bearing typical attribute of suppliants with a leader recognizable as Adrastus, Athena, a warrior recognizable as Theseus, and some children armed and bearded. These features would comprise components both of Aeschylus' *Men of Eleusis* and of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. The suppliants on the "Spina volute krater" are, in fact, men (as the chorus of Aeschylus' lost tragedy); they resemble ghosts and surrounded their leader Adrastus. They are thought to be the ghosts of the Seven who, bled by Athena, appeal to Theseus for their own burial. The presence of Athena recalls her intervention as *dea ex machina* in Euripides' play. The appearance of children, who are armed and bearded—despite their being children, which is visibly rendered through the smaller size than the other figures—would be an allusion to the expedition of the sons of the Seven, the Epigoni. As we have seen, this expedition is both foreshadowed and commanded by Athena on the occasion of her intervention at the conclusion of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*. A confirmation that the scene thus pertains to the tragedies of the Argive supplication is that, on the other side of the "Spina volute krater," there is the representation of the battle of the Seven against Thebes through several duels.

As for the visual representation of single, key personages, Evadne and Capaneus seem to have been a privileged object. Although there are doubts about whether it was a real 'art gallery' piece, one of the most ancient representations of the key episode involving Evadne and present in Euripides, i.e., her suicide on the pyre of her husband, would be a wall painting found in Naples according to the description of the Greek writer Philostratus (ca. 2nd–3rd century AD) in his *Imagines* (2. 30. 1–2).⁷¹ The painting vividly renders the driving force of Evadne's action, i.e., her love for her husband, as Philostratus' description proves:

... (Evadne) determined to die for love of him, not by drawing a knife against her throat nor by hanging herself..., such ways of death often chosen by women in honor of their husbands; she hurls herself into the fire itself, as if believing that it cannot possess the husband unless it has the wife as well. This is the funeral-offering made to Capaneus: his

71 See Storey (2008) 129–30.

wife . . . with no piteous look leaps into the flames, calling her husband, I am sure, for she looks as if she were calling out. And it seems to me that she would even offer her head to the thunderbolt for the sake of Capaneus.

Music

While there is no opera specifically inspired by *Suppliant Women*, an interesting remake in the form of a musical, with a mix of pop and rock music, is the modern production by a Dutch musical theatre company, the 'Veen Fabriek', founded in 2005 under the direction of Paul Koek, a musician himself by training. *Smekelingen* ("Suppliants/Vagrants") is the original title of the show produced in the spring 2006, first in Leiden in coproduction with the Greek Theseum Ensemble. It was later taken to the Hellenic Festival in Epidauros (July 2006).⁷² The music was the most important feature of this production; it was, in fact, what gave the play an unconventional character, revealing how the company and its director approached Euripides' tragedy rather as a pop concert. Through television screens located behind the set, visual images were projected while the action was playing before them. The play and performance were readapted in a way to evoke associations with the contemporary events of the last decades of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century, events like the intervention in the Balkans by the Western nations and the Dutch mission to Afghanistan, which was then in progress. The play also evoked related political issues, including the importance of democracy, as being a safeguard of international legal order, but also having its dark side, i.e., the consequences of military intervention in the name of that democracy. The play lasted more than two and a half hours, which constituted the downside of the production as it lost strength and conviction at one point.

Dance

To my knowledge there are no choreographies/ballets inspired by this play.

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Suppliant Women has had some success on the stage, above all in recent times. Out of the thirteen documented productions from the beginning of the 20th century to our days,⁷³ a few can be considered as an adaptation of the

⁷² See van Geijn (2006).

⁷³ Storey (2008) 135 and n. 8.

original in terms both of the staging style and format, and of their emphasis on specific themes of the original play, which would resonate with each specific, targeted modern situation. These themes include: issues of democratic rule with the question whether there might ever be an ideal leader, issues of political and military power with the question whether it is ever right to go to war, the lure of war, the theme of the often-neglected consideration of the aftermath of war, and the grief of loss.⁷⁴

The issues of democratic rule, which in Euripides' time as in ours is of topical interest, represent the ground of one among the few, most interesting adaptations on the modern stage: Euripides' *Suppliant Women* by Rush Rehm (1993), professor of Classics at Stanford University (CA, USA).⁷⁵ On the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of the founding of democracy in Athens, in collaboration with the Drama Department at Stanford, Rehm thought it appropriate to mark this date by staging this Euripidean play which, as seen, is traditionally regarded as an encomium of democratic Athens. Emphasizing the fact that the play was written when Athenian democracy was suffering serious erosions under the pressure of war and of a foreign policy of imperialism, Rehm chose it since "... it resonates with the modern situation of the United States. It reveals some of the pressures on our own democracy."⁷⁶ Rehm's interpretation and

74 See Storey (2008) 136–9. Beside the two productions I analyze above, Storey (2008) 135–6 mentions another one, a production in modern Greek performed in 1966 by the National Theatre of Greece, as a part of their mission to revive and restage the tragedies and comedies of the classical period. Worth mentioning is also a peculiar modern production of this tragedy, staged in 1986 in West Germany, by the director Einar Schlee (at the Frankfurt's Schauspielhaus) under the significant title *The Mothers*. It comprised Euripides' *Suppliant Women* and Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*; it lasted about four hours. The main, if not only, peculiar feature of Schlee's production pertains to the performance technique rather than to the content (the reason why I chose to hint at it in a note rather than above in the main text): according to Fisher-Lichte (2004), through *The Mothers* Schlee created a new form of theatre essentially based on the chorus' role, thus turning to the Greek theatre's origin in the chorus.

75 My discussion is in debt to the material that prof. Rehm has very generously shared with me, promptly responding to my request for assistance. I thus had the chance to read the performance program and several copies of the local journals' review of the performance (e.g., Hayde 1993; Ilff 1993; Seawell 1993; Winn 1993). I had also the privilege of seeing some pictures of the event. I take here the chance to thank Prof. Rehm.

76 So said Rehm in an interview for the *Stanford Observer* (see Seawell 1993). It should be noted that the production was essentially meant to be a part of a broader outreach project which aimed at celebrating democracy through a community-wide exploration of the role of the theatre in defining our sense of democratic community. The program included a town meeting on local democracy, a lecture series on democracy, and workshops.

subsequent staging of this Euripidean play centered around the challenge that the Argive suppliants posed to democratic Athens, by raising the question if and when it is worth embarking on a war. A special 'touch' was given to the production by the set stage design and the music. The audience was placed on the stage, looking out to the seating area, with the intention of conveying something of the view, distance, and space that the ancient audience had in their outdoor setting. A visual orchestration of the text was added to the action, through about two hundreds and fifty images that were projected onto a 25-foot-by-25-foot screen behind the play. Most of the images were projected during the choral parts to make more vivid the emotions they were expressing. Images of desert and dry fields, for instance, were projected when the women referred to their being "barren". The music, too, added to the peculiarity of this production: the theme of the persistence and political consequences of human grief were powerfully amplified with 'an explosively haunting melody'. The ending, i.e., the intervention of Athena *ex machina*, was filmed and thus projected onto the big screen. The overall production lasted about eighty-five minutes and met with great success.

A more innovative adaptation of the play is *As Yet Thou Art Young and Rash*, produced in New York City in January/February 2007, with a rehearsal in January 2008, by the Target Margin Theatre Company, directed by David Herskovits.⁷⁷ Far more than the productions that have been discussed so far, *As Yet Thou Art Young and Rash* stages the basic, 'human' and everlastingly relevant theme of the original: the ache of loss, the grief and mourning over the dead of war. The cast was constituted by just five actors: one man, representing Theseus, and four women, three middle-aged, representing the mothers (including Aethra), and one younger, representing both Evadne and, when wearing a white beard, Adrastus. Created as a universal meditation on loss, in particular on the grief over the death of a child, it was meant to resonate with the contemporary issue of the Iraq War. In a review, the play is indeed described as "a beautiful and moving elegy for soldiers killed in the Iraq War."⁷⁸ The essential message that this production was meant to communicate is caught in one single, powerful line: "You chose the sword instead of reason to settle disputes" (cf. Euripides, *Suppliants* 750). Through the emphasis created by the pause that the actress took after reciting it, by way of metatheatricality, this line became an indictment of the audience and the American people. The underlying commentary on the Iraq War is made apparent when on stage Theseus—who has entered Thebes—encounters the seven fallen Argive warriors. At this point images of

77 My analysis is based on Klasfed (2007), and Midgette (2007).

78 Klasfed (2007).

young men and women, recognizable as soldiers killed in Iraq, were projected onto a screen behind the playing area, while the actors read testimonials from the families of the dead, anecdotes from parents about their sons, or reminiscences from spouses and friends about their time together. And, as a way to complete this moving picture of ache of loss, oil lamps were lighted to recall the flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. These meditative remarks on the suffering of war and the questions that war raises are all very much in the spirit of the Euripidean original.

Screen

As far as I could ascertain, this play has not received a cinematic adaptation.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Suppliant Women*

The reception studies pertaining to *Suppliant Women* are not as vast as they are in the case of some 'major' tragedies of Euripides, the reason being the limited reception itself that—as it has often been pointed out—this tragedy can display through time, across cultures and fields of knowledge. So far as I could ascertain, besides one single comprehensive work of interpretation of this play, which includes a good section about its afterlife, i.e., Storey (2008),⁷⁹ there is not an extensive, comprehensive treatment of the reception of this tragedy as a whole, organized either *per* periods, or *per* fields, or *per* geographic areas, as is seen in other cases. There are rather some, yet only a few, contributions which deal with the reception of key-themes and / or key-characters of this tragedy both in antiquity—as is the case, for instance, with Statius' *Thebaid* 12—and beyond antiquity. One of these characters is Theseus. Harst's essay (2010) provides some information on the reception of this figure as he appears first in Euripides, and then in Statius, i.e., as a champion of democratic rule and of the oppressed. As hinted at above, through Statius this figure of Theseus 'has landed'; and has been adapted and re-proposed in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. As for scholarly works pertaining to this, it is worth mentioning: D. Anderson (1988) *Before the Knight's Tale: Imitation of Classical Epic in Boccaccio's Teseida*. (Philadelphia), and, with a parodistic tone, "A midsummer Night's Dream as a Comic Version of the Theseus Myth" by D. Fraeke, in D. Kehler (ed.) (1998) *A Midsummer Night's Dream. Critical Essay*. New York-London: Routledge, 260–74. Another figure that has received some attention is that of Capaneus, or, better, his unspeakable

79 Not accidentally it has been the main source for this essay.

arrogance. As has been seen, he appears in Dante and Milton. As to the latter, given the parallels that the poet drew between Capaneus and Satan,⁸⁰ adapting a pagan figure to a Christian one, it might be worth mentioning a study on Milton's specific reception and adaptation of some lines of Euripides' play, that is: Liam D. Haydon, "New Reference to Euripides's *The Suppliant Women* in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 46.2 (2012) 106–11.

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80 Regarding this, see, also, above, p. 336 and n. 68

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PART 3

The 'Fatal' Power of Love



Alcestis

Hanna M. Roisman

Euripides' Alcestis was first performed in Athens in 438 BC at the City Dionysia in place of a satyr-play. It is the story of Alcestis who agrees to die instead of her husband, Admetus, but is rescued from death by Heracles. The play deals with the themes of conjugal relationship, hospitality, courage, self-sacrifice, and death, all of which feature in its reception.

In Literature

Euripides' *Alcestis* was first performed in Athens at the City Dionysia in 438 BC. Presented as the fourth drama in the place of the customary satyr-play, it defies genre categorization and is sometimes termed 'prosatyric.' On the one hand, it deals with life and death, which are serious subjects; on the other, it has a comic side marked by non-sequiturs, absurdity, ambiguous exchanges, sexual innuendos, and the inebriated Heracles.¹

This chapter will briefly discuss the treatments of the Alcestis myth in the fine arts and on stage, but will focus on the reception of Euripides' *Alcestis* in 19th and 20th century English literature (drama and lyric poetry). L. P. E. Parker and, more recently, Niall Slater, as well as various entries in the *Encyclopedia of Greek Tragedy*,² have provided informative overviews of the reception both of Euripides' play and, more generally, of the Alcestis myth since ancient times in European and American literature and opera.³ By restricting this chapter to a relatively small number of works, I will be able to treat the selected works in greater depth and detail. Both Parker's and Slater's overviews are concerned primarily with changes and continuities in the plot and depictions of the main characters: Alcestis, Admetus, and (in some cases) Pheres, over time and place.

1 For discussion see for example Roisman (2000) 182–90; Luschig/Roisman (2003) 166–72, 178–90.

2 Parker (2003), (2007) xxiv–xxxvi; Slater (2013) 66–84; Roisman (2014).

3 I use the term 'myth or play' because some of the works that will be discussed were clearly based on Euripides' play, while others harkened back to Apollodorus or, more generally, to the story itself, with no reference to specific authorship.

This chapter will focus, instead, on what each author has tried to accomplish in his (all the writers were male) work, that is, on the purpose to which he put the myth or play and on the issues and themes that his own work deals with.

My assumption is that each author strove to treat the myth in his own way. Their purpose was not to present Euripides' play or the *Alcestis* myth to the audience, but to produce a work of literature or drama that had its own point to make. Euripides' play or the myth itself provided the point of departure, with each author developing different aspects of the original, and departing from it in keeping with his own interests and purposes. The approach of the later writers is similar to that taken by the 5th century tragedians, who themselves relied on prior sources for their plays and took considerable liberty with these sources.

The first adaptations of Euripides' *Alcestis* in the 19th century were burlesques. The heyday of Victorian burlesque was between 1830 and 1870. Although there were few performances of serious plays based on the Greek tragedies during those years, the middle of the 19th century abounded with burlesques of classical myths and works.

As Hall describes them, burlesques were semi-musical travesties that caricatured serious texts and stories, from Greek tragedy and Ovid to Shakespeare and the *Arabian Nights*.⁴ Their primary purpose was entertainment for all classes of society. According to Hall, their cross-class appeal is evidence of the wide-ranging familiarity with Greek myths and Greek tragedies in Victorian society.⁵ Such familiarity undoubtedly enhanced the pleasure derived from the burlesques; but their wild extravagance, ubiquitous punning, doggerel verse, catchy rhymes, dance, and songs to familiar tunes were entertaining on their own, as was their mockery of whatever subject they dealt with.

Of all the three burlesques of Euripides' play, Issachar Styrke's *Alcestis Burlesqued* (1816) follows most closely its plot and speeches. It is also the longest of the three burlesques, more than twice the length of Euripides' play. Except for the choral songs, it is written in iambic quadrameter couplets. It opens with a brief 'argument' that brings the audience up to the point of *Alcestis*' departure on the road to *Dis* (Hades). The body of the play elaborates on the key elements of Euripides' original in a tone of unwavering levity, starting with

4 Hall (1999) 337.

5 Thus, in 1859, crowds in London could watch *The Siege of Troy*, based on the *Iliad*; in 1865, the London theatres presented five burlesques based on Greek myths: *Pirithoüs*, *Glaucus*, *Echo* and *Narcissus* (Byron's *Pan: or, the loves of Echo and Narcissus*), the *Odyssey*, and *Prometheus Bound*.

the list of characters, in which Apollo is described as ‘the god of fiddling and fortunetelling’ and Rawheadandbloodybones is the sobriquet for Death. The levity, which constitutes the play’s humor, is marked by the consistent rendition of all that is moving and painful in the original in the most casual, coarse, and cliché terms. For example, Rawheadandbloodybones says that Alcestis will be his, “as dead as mutton” (l. 153).⁶ The Semichorus deduces that Alcestis has not yet died on the grounds that, if she had, “expense to save,/ they [her family] would privately hug out her carcass to th’ grave” (ll. 170–1). The Lady’s Maid, speaking of Admetus, says: “the cuddy has some feeling,/As he shows clearly by his squealing” (ll. 364–5). Alcestis, seeing Charon’s boat, declares: “Yonder’s that hellish tar *Old Charon*,/This way with saucer eyes a staring” (ll. 470–1). Admetus tells Heracles that he “must stay here /And fill your maw with beef and beer” (ll. 1012–3).

The levity seems to be its own end. The themes of marriage and hospitality treated by Euripides also inform Styrke’s version. Combining misogynistic sentiments with the idealization of Alcestis, the Chorus berate Admetus for never having loved Alcestis (ll. 860–1) even as they repeatedly refer to her and other wives as a “rib” and state that “It needs no pig-wisdom to see, / That marriage is but a misery” (ll. 456–7). The high standard set by Alcestis, they indicate, is not to be expected of other wives. Some two-thirds of the play is taken up with Heracles’ visit. Admetus’ hospitality is drawn as the motive behind Heracles’ rescue of Alcestis. However, the ending of the play is incongruous. Closing the play, the Chorus observe that “the chips and changes of life are many” and acknowledge the waywardness of Fortune. This commentary refers to the strange resurrection of Alcestis and is similar to that with which Euripides play closes, but Styrke has done nothing to prepare the audience for this idea.

Thirty-four years passed before Francis Talfourd produced his burlesque of Euripides’ *Alcestis*, in 1850 at the Strand Theater.⁷ He was twenty-two years old at the time, a student of Classics at Christ Church, Oxford. Although he never graduated, he was described in his obituary as a person of a “gay and brilliant intellect.”⁸ The play was subsequently performed in New York, where, according to Robert Davis, it “was successful enough to induce a rivalry between Brougham’s Theater and Burton’s Olympic Theater, which each presented concurrent dueling productions.”⁹

6 Lines are to Styrke (1816).

7 For the history of the *Alcestis* on the British stage up to 1914, see Hall/Macintosh (2005).

8 His father, Thomas Talfourd, was a radical Member of Parliament who wrote an important tragedy entitled *Ion*, in 1836. For discussion see Hall (1997).

9 Davis (2008).

Talfourd's wit and virtuosity are demonstrated in every line of his burlesque. Aside from the songs, the play is written in iambic pentameter couplets. There is hardly a couplet of lines without at least one pun, and the rhymes are both catchy and zany (i.e., "I am Apollo—/ . . . it doesn't follow," p. 5; "impropriety / . . . genteel society," p. 6).¹⁰

In a tribute to Euripides towards the end of the play, and a modest and accurate valuation of his own work (p. 26), Talfourd has Admetus sing:

With our author we've made bold, sirs,
 Less welcome pr'aps than free!
 Yet as we're evanescent,
 And Euripides will stay,
 Let our insect life be pleasant—
 We but ask to live a day.

The full title of the play, *Alcestis, The Original Strong-Minded Woman: A Classical Burlesque, A Most shameless Misinterpretation of the Greek Drama of Euripides*, similarly disavows serious purposes.

Nonetheless, we may ask what Talfourd was burlesquing. The main point of mockery was the idealization of conjugal love and marriage, with its notions of wifely devotion, sacrifice, and love, subjects of concern in Victorian England.¹¹ In keeping with this focus, the intergenerational conflict between father and son that features in Euripides' *Alcestis* is omitted, and a Shakespearean subplot is added.

The mockery of love begins with Orcus' (Death's) hope that Alcestis will agree to die in Admetus' place because he is in love with her and wants her for himself. It is given fuller expression in the characterization of Admetus and

¹⁰ Page numbers are to Talfourd (1850).

¹¹ The theme of love, although absent in the original, recurs in the later treatments. Marguerite Yourcenar's *Le mystère d'Alceste* ("The mystery of Alcestis," 1944) attributes to Alcestis a mixture of love and hatred for her husband. As Howard puts it, Alcestis' sacrifice "is an escape from strangulation, a negative response to her negated existence. We can recognize her death, which takes place even as she cries out for that icy drink of water that would slake her thirst for the life she never got to lead, as the end of a long process of suffocation": see Howard (1992) 58. Howard believes that Admetus is responsible for Alcestis' demise not only because of the mythical plot, but also because of his male function within the societal mores. For Howard the play is "both hopeful and a strikingly feminist play." Yourcenar refuses to locate Alcestis' death in the traditional dynamics of self-abnegation, revealing rather the sacrificial place ascribed to woman within Western art and culture: Howard (1992) 75.

Alcestis and in the subplot. In the list of characters, Admetus is described as “an individual weak in intellect,” and not “recommended by any Faculty.” In the play itself, he is depicted similarly to the Euripidean original, as a self-absorbed lout, and Alcestis describes her marriage to him as a “curse” (p. 17). Alcestis herself is drawn as less than devoted to him. Her motive for her sacrifice is not wifely love or devotion but the desire for honor. In a spoof of the upper class view of themselves as cultured and moral, Talfourd has his down-to-earth Alcestis declare in casual, colloquial tones ill becoming a high-born tragic figure: “I’ve half a mind / To do the heroine!” (p. 10). Her request to Orcus to give her a few minutes to deliver her “maiden speech” (p. 11) similarly shows her consciously playing an outmoded heroic role. So does the speech itself, as Alcestis makes the unlikely declaration that she does not much care that she is going to die because “some fine day / Folks will dub me a heroine. . . . in a play / And I as a martyr shall chronicled be, / As the heroine great of some tragedee” (p. 12).

The subplot features the house servants, Phaedra and Polax, as a sparring couple who will marry at the end, but not necessarily happily. Polax is a womanizer whose promise to be faithful beggars belief, while Phaedra, though warm and affectionate, is something of a shrew. Thus, in both the upper and lower classes, what is presented as love is shown to fall far short of any ideal.

The values of ancient Greek society, including the exaltation of honor and fame, are another object of mockery. As the play’s mockery of Alcestis’ quest for honor and fame suggests, this value better belongs to the ancient Greek theatre than to life as people actually live it.

The elevated language and rhetorical conventions of ancient tragedy are also mocked, for example in Alcestis’ statement that she will speak to Phaedra, her maid, in “the regular classical soliloquy” (p. 16), and in the self-consciousness of her statement:

My parents were apparent till *hell* held ‘em
(Forgive the monosyllable, sweet ladies,
I meant but *Tartarus*, or the classic *Hades*) (p. 17, my italics).

They are also mocked in the mimicry of Euripides’ Alcestis’ long soliloquy to her bed. In the opening line, “Oh bed!—beg pardon—nuptial couch, I mean (p. 16),” Talfourd demonstrates how unnatural the elevated language of the classical tragedies is to the coarsened characters of his own age and rendition. Indeed, in place of the serious concerns of Euripides’ Alcestis, who worries about the stepmother’s proverbial cruelty, Talfourd’s burlesque Alcestis wonders who will sew the button on her baby son’s shirt and mend his trousers.

Alcestis offered Talfourd an opportunity to spoof the relations between the sexes. The subplot was an addition inspired by the double plots of Shakespearean tragedy.

The anonymous *Alcestis or Euripides Destroyed* (1866) was performed some sixteen years after Talfourd's burlesque first appeared. Although it possesses less substance than Talfourd's version and little of its superb virtuosity, it shows its influence. Like Talfourd, the anonymous author advertises in his title that his burlesque grossly distorts Euripides' original and does not do it justice. Like Talfourd, he focuses on the marital relationship and similarly presents a (relatively) good woman dying for a lout of a husband, albeit a drunkard rather than a dimwit. Also as in Talfourd's play, his high-born hero and heroine lack the dignity of the high-born characters of Greek tragedy and speak in a lower class register.

However, while Talfourd focused on *Alcestis*, the anonymous play hardly shows her at all and focuses instead on *Admetus*, in all his shortcomings. From the beginning, the author depicts *Admetus* as a drunken lout, with no compunction about his wife's dying for him and not even transitory or affected grief at her absence. This *Admetus* accepts *Alcestis*' willingness to sacrifice her life for him with a cynical interpretation: "I see your little game, you die to shine/In history as a classic heroine" (p. 4).¹² This motive, while present in Talfourd's version, is stated by *Alcestis*, rather than by the person who benefits from it. Even before she is dead, the *Admetus* of this burlesque is glad to be rid of her. Moreover, unlike any other *Admetus* in literature, he is dismayed when she is resurrected. He even asks *Heracles* to return her to the underworld or take her away with him, and, when *Heracles* refuses, engages him in a fist-fight.

Alcestis or Euripides' Destroyed also depicts *Admetus* as no better than the father, *Pheres*, who refused to die for him. *Pheres* did not appear in Talfourd's burlesque. Here he appears at *Alcestis*' funeral, where he justifies his refusal to die for *Admetus* and warns him that he should not expect any profit from his death. While the scene clearly presents *Pheres* as a skinflint, it suggests that *Admetus* looks forward to inheriting his father's wealth.

Notwithstanding its uncomplimentary depiction of *Admetus*, this burlesque is a 'male' rendition which exploits the currency of misogyny. Shortly before *Alcestis* exits for the underworld, *Admetus* warns her not to return and sings: "For me one wife/is enough for life" (p. 6). *Alcestis* responds with some nonsensical advice to her daughter and with the warning to *Admetus* that if he takes another wife, her ghost will rise up to haunt him. At the end of Act 2 (p. 13), *Admetus* proclaims: "I got my wife to die, a little game / I recommend to

12 Page numbers are to *Alcestis or Euripides Destroyed* (1866).

married men.” The statement, like this burlesque as a whole, speaks to the married man’s wish for freedom and (occasional) fantasy of being rid of his wife.

For all their levity, the burlesques seem to have inspired a more serious treatment of the Alcestis story and Euripides’ play. The years 1868 through 1871 saw the publication of three renditions: William Morris’ *The Love of Alcestis* (1868), Francis Turner Palgrave’s *Alcestis* (1871) and Robert Browning’s *Balaustion’s Adventure* (1871). All three versions are imbued with a moral fervor. In all of them, Alcestis is the model of the ideal wife, and Admetus a respected and beloved king worthy of her sacrifice. In other respects, they differ markedly from one another.

Morris’ *The Love of Alcestis* (1868) is one of many tales told in his long poem, *The Earthly Paradise*. About half the tales originate in Greek myth, half in Nordic myth. As in the Italian poet Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (1348–1353) and the English well-known Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (1380s), each story is told by a different traveler in the course of a journey. Each tale is told at a particular time of year. *The Love of Alcestis* is told in June, when spring turns into summer. It covers Admetus’ courtship of Alcestis, their happy marriage, and Alcestis’ death, with no traces of Euripides’ play.

Along with the consecration of married love, the main theme of the poem is the inevitability of death and loss. Although Morris’ rendition contains many elements of fairy tale (i.e., charms, curses, and ritualistic repetitions of the number three), it pointedly omits Alcestis’ resurrection. In the course of the story, Apollo performs numerous miracles. He helps Admetus to win Alcestis’ hand by taming the boar and the lion that her father requires her suitors to ride. He tells Admetus how to banish the monster that bars the door to Alcestis’ bridal chamber, but he does not even hint that Alcestis can be resurrected. Heracles is not included in the poem.

As in fairy tales, Admetus is a brave young man and a wise and temperate king; in his youth, he is described as “young, strong, and godlike” (l. 9);¹³ in adulthood as a wise king who appreciates what he has and is not greedy for more. As he ages, he grows in wisdom and wealth. Alcestis is a loving wife; and they live many years together, in “honour and love, plenty and peace” (l. 976). Their virtues and their love for one another are constantly dwelled on. Not a single shortcoming is mentioned.

Nonetheless, it is made clear that the idyll will not last. The Prologue announces: “on the end of glorious life it [the poem] dwells” (l. 26). When describing the young lovers’ bliss, Morris writes: “For every thought but love

13 Line numbers are to Morris (2002).

was now gone by,/And they forgot that they should ever die." (ll. 612–3). On their wedding day, they began to lead a life of great delight: "But neither so would wingèd time abode, the changing year came round to autumn tide" (ll. 820–1). Before leaving his servitude to Admetus, Apollo tells them: "to-day thou hast felicity, / But the times change, and I can see a day / When all thine happiness shall fade away" (ll. 859–61). His message to them is thus to "be merry, strive not with the end" (l. 862) that they cannot change: "And live thy life, till death itself shall come, / And turn to naught the storehouse of thine home. . . ." (ll. 868–9).

The one concession the poem makes to the longing for immortality inherent in the myth is the storyteller's wistful commentary as he closes his tale. He says of Admetus: "if he died I cannot tell" (l. 1284); "or else, oft born again, had many a name" (l. 1286). Of Alcestis, he states that her fame grew greater "all through the lands of Greece" (l. 1287). But these hints sound more like the wishful thinking of the storyteller—and the rest of us—than an assertion of faith.

A second strand that runs through Morris's tale is the suffering of the survivor. This theme appears in Euripides' play in Admetus' egotistical anticipation of the loneliness and desolation he will suffer with Alcestis' death. Morris' Admetus faces his impending death with equanimity and resignation, does not ask anyone to die for him, and is troubled above all by the fact that Alcestis will remain alone, having no more part in his life or death (ll. 1040–1). Alcestis determines to die in Admetus' place not out of any notion of sacrifice but because she cannot envision a life without Admetus: "how can I live to bear/an empty heart about" (ll. 1176–7).

Francis Turner Palgrave's *Alcestis* (1871), a poem of 57 five-line stanzas telling the story of Alcestis' sacrifice from her own perspective, also owes little to Euripides' play. The poem's primary purpose is to sing the praises of wifely self-sacrifice.

Alcestis' sacrifice is framed as a politically motivated, divinely sanctioned act for the public good. Twelve years into a happy marriage, Alcestis learns of Admetus' impending death and the possibility of ransoming him after she asks "the spokesman of the household throng" (stanza 4) why the people are mourning.¹⁴ The statement shows the public upset about the impending loss of their beloved king. Divine sanction is established when Alcestis throws an incense offering on the altar to help her decide what to do. The white wreaths she sees rising from it let her understand that it is her lot to exchange her life for Admetus'.

14 References are to Palgrave (1871).

Once Alcestis realizes what she must do, her main concern is with her children, whose development she will not see. It is only after the decision has been made that love for Admetus comes into play. Alcestis declares in stanza 30: "Ah, yet it must be Love! and I submit."

Alcestis' explanation for her deed is: "it must not be that thou should'st die,/ Thessalia's shining herd; the people's eye; Twixt gods and men throned in a middle path" (stanza 31). In other words Admetus is too important to cease to exist; his life is more valuable than hers. Portrayed as a good mother, her main concern is that she will no longer see her children, who will grow up motherless. Nonetheless, as in Euripides' play, this does not move her to change her mind. Her resolve is acknowledged by a grateful Admetus who kneels down to kiss her hand, and reinforced by the approval of her son and daughter.

Unlike Morris, Palgrave has his heroine resurrected. Similar to Browning,¹⁵ the agent of her resurrection is Persephone, not Heracles. As Persephone explains after Alcestis returns, the resurrection comes in response to Admetus' prayer and as a reward for Alcestis' self-sacrifice. In stanza 53 Persephone enunciates the moral of the poem:

A wealth of gifts God grants the race of man . . . Strength, courage, wisdom, love, and loveliness;/ Yet one the smiles of God supremely bless;—
The heroic beauty of self-sacrifice.

In other words, a woman can give her life for her husband and have it back again!

Robert Browning's dramatic dialogue *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871) was apparently written in response to the request by one Lady Cowper for a translation of Euripides' *Alcestis*. It took Browning one month to complete.¹⁶ It is set against the background of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC), as presented in Plutarch's *Life of Nicias* (1st century AD), which tells how the Sicilians helped a group of fleeing Athenians because they were so delighted by their knowledge of Euripides. Balaustion ("wild pomegranate flower") is a young girl of Rhodes, who admires Athens and its poetry. She tells a group of four girlfriends how she fled with her family during the Peloponnesian War to Sicily, and

¹⁵ See below, esp. pp. 358–60.

¹⁶ McAleer (1951) 362. Woolford (2012) 569–73 suggests that Browning was responding in his dramatic monologue to both Palgrave's and Morris' treatments of the myth. Be as this may, he must have also tailored his treatment to the needs of his narrative purpose. For the circumstances of its composition, influences, and immediate literary reactions and criticisms, see Woolford (2012) 564–5.

then to Athens. The Syracusans were about to refuse them shelter, but when Balaustion offered to recite Euripides' *Alcestis*, the Syracusans came to their aid. Thus Euripides' play saved Balaustion and her family from captivity and also got her a husband.¹⁷ The first 357 lines describe Balaustion's background and the redemptive power of poetry. The remainder is a recital of Euripides' *Alcestis*, with interjections of Balaustion's moralistic interpretations of the unfolding dramatic events. After finishing the ancient tale, Balaustion offers her 'modern' version of the Admetus-Alcestis story, which is thus told twice. Although the poem follows the plot of Euripides' play with a certain fidelity, it is an interpretation rather than a translation. In fact, it deals with the issue of reception itself.

The framing story has several functions. It reinforces the notion of the power of poetry, which is a major theme of Browning's rendition. It enables the constant stream of interpretation and moralizing that accompanies the account of the action. It allows Browning to make Balaustion an omniscient narrator who, like a poet, relates what the protagonists think and explains their actions. It also legitimizes the many liberties that Browning takes with Euripides' play.

Before embarking on her account, Balaustion declares her (the poet's) right to interpret the received work:

"Hear the play itself!" she tells her friends. "Tis the poet speaks:
But if I, too, should try and speak at times,
leading your love to where my love, perchance,
climbed earlier . . . (p. 17)"¹⁸

After she completes her account of Euripides' play, she gives her own account of the tale (pp. 87–96). In her new version, a 'reformed' Admetus vows to rule only for his people's sake and rejects offers to die in his place. Alcestis insists on dying anyway, but her death infuses Admetus with her strength and, by virtue of this strength, she, too, is revitalized, because Persephone refuses to accept her once she has given away her life's strength. The narrative concludes with a happy, fairy-tale ending: "So the two lived together long and well." Of note is Balaustion's justification for the elaboration of the story:

17 Browning's praise of Euripides via his protagonist is at odds with the heavy scholarly condemnation of Euripides since the beginning of 19th century and during the composition of this dramatic dialogue: see Michelini (2014).

18 Page numbers follow Browning (1871).

Since one thing may have so many sides . . .
 You, I, or any one, might mould a new
 Admetus, new Alcestis. (p. 87)

Throughout her rendition, Balaustion extols Euripides, but she also insists that the modern poet has every right to rewrite the ancient text.

As early as the 1880s, scholars have asked whether Browning misinterpreted Euripides' play when he painted Admetus as selfish and cowardly and Heracles as the savior of mankind.¹⁹ The question is whether this was Browning's view or the view of Balaustion, an idealistic and romantic young girl, who saw Admetus as cowardly and selfish and Heracles as a benefactor, and who deplored that no word of love was exchanged between the couple prior to Alcestis' death.²⁰

Was Balaustion's reading of Admetus entirely wrong? Over the years, many scholars have agreed that Euripides' portrayal of Admetus is not complimentary.²¹ He might have been a great host, but neither his obtuseness toward his dying wife nor his asking his parents to die for him can be ignored. Yet Balaustion's innocent and positive view of people shows itself in her final perception of Admetus, in which she does not view him as entirely negative. After he loses Alcestis, she sees a moral development in Admetus, manifested by his realization of the truth about himself and the life he is now to live in solitude.

The liberties Browning took with the demi-god Heracles in order to allow for Balaustion's admiration are more complicated, but become clear at the end of her monologue. Euripides took a burlesque figure of the satyr-plays and transformed him into an essentially noble character without removing much of his former buffoonery. The Euripidean Heracles encompasses not only the drunkard comic figure but also a person whose moral compass leads him to stop his feasting and rescue Alcestis from Death (Euripides, *Alcestis* 837–60). Balaustion's idealized Heracles is a much greater and more benevolent figure. The reason for this portrayal is not apparent until the very end of the monologue, when, in her own interpretation of the story, Balaustion equates the

19 See also Tisdal (1917) 519.

20 Most scholars identify Balaustion's views with Browning's; for a recent example, see Parker (2007) xxxii. Some scholars identify the character Balaustion with Browning's wife Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who died ten years before the poem's publication: see Brown (2009) 294–5.

21 For early scholarship close to the publication of *Balaustion's Adventure*, see Tisdal (1917), who also showed how Browning's translation skewed the original to show Admetus at his worst (1917) 525–8. For more recent views, see Luschnig/Roisman (2003) 163–7.

power of the conjugal love which brought Alcestis back to life with the force of the mythic demi-god who brought about her resurrection in Euripides' treatment. This is an idealistic and sentimental view of love, held by a young woman, still a girl, as she seeks to put flesh and bone on an illusive power. She has transposed Alcestis' return to life from the plot of Euripides' play to her own life, in which she attributes her rescue from the pirates to Heracles.

The inclusion of Heracles was compulsory for Browning, who chose to translate Euripides' play, in contrast to his literary friends who adapted the myth of Alcestis but not Euripides' treatment of it. Palgrave excised Heracles completely from his poem, published one month before Browning's monologue, although it is clear from their correspondence that each poet knew what the other was writing.²² Morris similarly omitted Heracles from his *Love of Alcestis* (1868), and allowed Alcestis to die. The aggrandizement of Heracles in Browning's poem did not stem from the simple wish to depart from the Greek play. Rather, it stemmed from his decision to tell the myth from the perspective of a young girl and to balance her view of events. That is, while Balaustion, in her own tale of the story, attributes the resurrection of Alcestis to the love that Alcestis and Admetus have for one another, the poem points up the role played by Heracles.²³

The 20th century's four renditions of the Alcestis story will be discussed here: those by Howard and Sonia Lovecraft, Thornton Wilder, T. S. Eliot, and Ted Hughes.

Alcestis by Howard Phillips Lovecraft, a famous writer of horror stories, and his wife Sonia Haft Greene Lovecraft, is a misleadingly titled short play written in the early 1930's and published in holograph form in 1985.²⁴ It touches only briefly and partially on the Alcestis story, namely on how Apollo came to be Admetus' servant and how he helped Admetus win Alcestis' hand in marriage. The only reference to Alcestis' sacrifice is Apollo's prayerful statement to Admetus:

May she repay a passion such as yours with love no less, and as your queen/inspire new tales of loyalty and sacrifice to give her name undying

²² Cf. Woolford (2012) 566–7.

²³ See de L. Ryals (1973) 1042 for the view that the poem is about "salvation, first through art and then through love."

²⁴ Stephen King is quoted saying: "Now that time has given us some perspective on his work, I think it is beyond doubt that H. P. Lovecraft has yet to be surpassed as the twentieth century's greatest practitioner of the classic horror tale": see Wohleber (1995).

life in song. Alcestis! With devotion running bright, and fated to defy the powers of night. (p. 13)²⁵

The statement fits in with the play's theme of overcoming the fate of death imposed on human beings by a jealous and vindictive Zeus intent on retaining his superior power. Alcestis does not appear in the play, Admetus only briefly.

Thornton Wilder's *Alcestiad* was first performed on August 22nd, 1955 at the Edinburgh Festival, after a very long period of gestation and writing.²⁶ In her foreword to the published text, his sister, Isabel Wilder, writes that his interest in the story goes back to his boyhood, when at age eight he read or was read Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable*, and the tale "captured his imagination—and his heart."²⁷ He began working on the play in 1939, but its writing was interrupted by his service in World War II. He resumed work on it only in the latter part of 1953, when he began from scratch.²⁸

The play consists of three acts, twelve years apart, to which Wilder later added the short satyr-play. As Wilder explains in his "Notes on *The Alcestiad*," each act draws on a different part of the myth.²⁹ Only the second act deals with Alcestis' death and resurrection. The first act dramatizes Alcestis' shift from love of Apollo and the desire to sacrifice herself as his priestess to love of Admetus and the desire to be his wife. The second act traces the shift from the impending death of Admetus, as he sits exhausted and semi-paralyzed awaiting his fate, to the death of Alcestis. In place of Euripides' egotistical ruler, terrified of dying and clinging to life at all costs, Wilder drew Admetus as

25 Page number is to Lovecraft/Lovecraft (1985).

26 The play was titled *A Life in the Sun* over Wilder's objection. It was directed by Tyrone Guthrie (who not only retitled the play but also inserted *The Drunken Sisters* between Act 1 and 2) with Irene Worth as Alcestis. The play's reception was lukewarm: see Blank (1996) 91. Wilder knew he should make revisions, but he did not. In 1957 he signed a contract to have the play performed in Zurich, translated into German with only minor revisions: Blank (1996) 97 n. 20. *The Drunken Sisters* followed the play as a satyr-play should. After great success the play was performed throughout Germany, and also in Vienna. Further revisions followed, with the German script translated by Herberth E. Herlitschka and published in 1960 by Fischer Verlag in Frankfurt am Main. Wilder also wrote a libretto for an opera, *The Alcestiad*, performed in Hamburg in 1962. Later it was performed in concert form, and arias from it have been sung at various recitals to thunderous applause. The play in its entirety was published in English in 1977. For a full account of its productions see Wilder (1997) 275–7. Also, cf. Blank (1996).

27 See Foreword by Isabel Wilder in Wilder (1977) xiv.

28 Wilder (1977) e.g., xvii–xviii.

29 Wilder (1997) 167–9.

anticipating his death with equanimity and unaware, until the last moment, that Alcestis had opted to replace him. The third act provides an answer to the question: 'What happened after Alcestis was brought back from the underworld?' It shows Alcestis dressed in rags, a widow and a slave in Thessaly, ruled by the Thracian tyrant Agis who had deposed and murdered Admetus. The act opens with the city beset by a plague and the Watchman telling the populace that Alcestis is to be blamed for the pestilence.³⁰ It ends with Agis chastened by the death of his beloved daughter and Apollo returning to take Alcestis off to his paradise.

By Wilder's own admission, his concern in the trilogy was less with the characters or plot than with the idea—specifically, with the place of the divine in human life. In his Journal entry of January 25, 1955, Wilder wrote that he had planned to write a play in which "we could never be certain that the Supernatural was, truly speaking, hovering—nay, existing."³¹ However, the deity, in the form of Apollo, the Greek god of light whom Christian writers have treated as a stand-in for Christ, has a strong physical presence in the play. The play opens with a confrontation between Apollo and Death (the only scene that owes anything to Euripides' rendition) and ends with Apollo taking Alcestis to his special garden. The philosophical issue with which Wilder grapples in the play is the paradox at the heart of Judeo-Christian belief: namely that the reputedly loving god causes those he loves so much suffering. As Death puts it: "When the gods come near to men, sooner or later someone is killed" (p. 15).³² Wilder's emphasis on this idea resulted in a play weak in character development and plot, and weighed down by a stupefying quantity of Kierkegaardian philosophy, which he was reading at the time.³³

30 Koustsoudaki (1994) 354–5 points out that the "theme of the plague and purification process is older than literature and present in myth and the ritual throughout the world." He also points to Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* as a possible source of imitation.

31 For Wilder's all Journal Entries mentioned above, see Gallup (1985).

32 Page numbers are to Wilder (1977).

33 Journal entry, Dec. 7, 1954. This and other aspects of Wilder's thinking have been well treated, e.g., by Haberman (1967), Miller (1983), Porter (1985), Brady (1999), Corrigan (1996). Haberman discusses the religious thrust of the play and the influence of Kierkegaard on Wilder, which he claims to be "almost alone as a serious religious play written by a contemporary American": Haberman (1967) 40; Miller (1983) focuses on the eschatological vision of Nicholas Berdyaev appearing in Thornton Wilder's late works. Porter (1985) 147–9 focuses on the classical sources of the play, especially the gods, and on the comparative religious aspect. Brady (1999) asserts that the motif of Disguise and by implication identity connects the three acts of the play. Corrigan (1996) focuses on Kierkegaard's philosophy and the tragic sense of life in Wilder's works.

The idealization of the main characters also leads to a lack of tension between husband and wife. In the second act, for instance, Alcestis and Admetus spend their last moments together, declaring their love and recollecting their youthful conduct. The scene demonstrates the love that fires Alcestis' sacrifice. It also shows Alcestis' ecstasy as, moments before her death, she finally attains certainty of connection with the divine: "Living or dead, we are watched; we are guided, we are understood" (p. 75). As for the plot, unlike in the Greek tragedies, the action is not driven by the heroes' passions and the thoughts that arise from those passions. Rather events simply happen, strung together to illustrate a point.

In many respects, *The Alcestiad* is a well-crafted play with some compelling scenes. Nonetheless, Wilder's own judgment, in his Journal entry of January 25, 1955, shortly after he completed the first draft of *The Alcestiad*, that "the vast undertaking... has fallen conspicuously short" is unfortunately apt. Having used Euripides' original, he was clearly disappointed in his own use of it.

The Cocktail Party by T. S. Eliot is a verse drama first mounted at the Edinburgh Festival in 1949.³⁴ In striking contrast to the other works of reception, its debt to Euripides' *Alcestis* is not at once apparent to the uninformed audience. Only Eliot's assertion in his 1951 lecture, "Poetry and Drama," that *The Cocktail Party* had its "point of departure" in Euripides' *Alcestis* revealed its connection to Euripides' play.³⁵ This revelation resulted in an outpouring of scholarship pointing out the two plays' many similarities and differences.³⁶

In keeping with its title, the play opens with the cocktail party ostensibly thrown by Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayn. Lavinia, who stands as a parallel to Alcestis, is mysteriously absent, while her husband, Edward, who parallels Admetus, hosts the party on his own. An uninvited guest, the psychoanalyst Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, is the play's version of Heracles, whom he resembles in his penchant for drink and song as well as in the role he plays in the couple's life. Just as Heracles had brought back Alcestis from the Underworld, so Harcourt-Reilly, having assured Edward that Lavinia will return, facilitates

34 Directed by Martin Browne, with Irene Worth as Celia Coplestone.

35 Eliot (1951) 38.

36 Heilman (1953) follows the various "parallels in plot, the anatomical resemblances" between the two plays (107) in an attempt to show how Eliot's play explores, reinterprets and enlarges upon the ancient material. A good summary of the parallels may be found in Reckford (1964) 2. Reckford (1964) 1 argues that "Eliot owes a greater debt to Euripides than meets the eye" and goes on to examine it, emphasizing the two plays' treatments of the theme of hospitality. For a highly inclusive comparison between the ancient play and Eliot's comedy, see Phelan (1990).

their reconciliation. As it has been said, "Harcourt-Reilly represents symbolically the divine figure who restores to the husband the wife whom he has lost and who, by abandoning him had, as it were, died for him."³⁷ To these four characters, Eliot has added four more: Celia Coplestone, Peter Quilpe, Julia, and Alexander Gibbs. According to Tanner, Peter and Celia, who are having an affair, serve as doubles for Edward and Lavinia. Julia, who knows everyone and goes everywhere, replaces Apollo in the model, and Alexander, whose cooking Julia 'terms poisonous,' represents Death.³⁸

Although the parallels between Edward, Lavinia, and Harcourt-Reilly and the Euripidean characters are fairly evident and the others can be well argued, the question of their significance arises. For one thing, if the audience does not know that *The Cocktail Party* was inspired by Euripides' *Alcestis*, which the first audiences did not, they would never suspect any connection. There is simply too much distance between Eliot's drawing room comedy centered on the mysterious disappearance and return of a wife dissatisfied in her lonely marriage and Euripides' drama of death and return from the Underworld for a connection to be discerned without prior notification. This too is the case of the connection between Celia's crucifixion, which we may assume she had not intended, as she attempted to bring Christianity to the heathen, and Alcestis' intentional sacrifice so that her husband could live. Secondly, there is the question of whether knowing the connections enriches one's understanding of *The Cocktail Party*.

Unlike the other authors discussed in this chapter, Eliot is not in a dialogue with Euripides. In his article "Poetry and Drama," he wrote that Euripides' play served him as a "point of departure" for his play.³⁹ In practical terms, this simply seems to mean that he adopted the themes of marriage and sacrifice from Euripides' play.

The nature of the marital relationship is not dealt within Euripides' play. It is nowhere suggested in the play that Alcestis might have agreed to die for her egotistical husband because she did not want to live with him. Moreover, with the exception of the writers of the burlesques, the later writers prior to Eliot attributed Alcestis' sacrifice to her love for Admetus.

Eliot, in contrast, has created a drawing room drama in which the alienation between husband and wife is central. Lavinia has left Edward nothing but a note saying that she will not return, but not why. At the beginning of the play,

37 Most (2010) 109.

38 Tanner (1970).

39 Eliot (1951) 38, first delivered as a Spencer Lecture on 'Poetry and Drama' at Harvard in 1950.

Edward describes her disappearance as a “mystery,” yet also admits that there was little love between them. “Why speak of love?” he asks the Unidentified Guest. “We were used to each other” (p. 29).⁴⁰ Later he tells Celia, with whom he has been having an affair: “It is not that I am in love with Lavinia./I don’t think I was ever really in love with her” (p. 64). The play offers no vision of marital intimacy. Harcourt-Reilly declares that husband and wife are invariably “strangers” to one another (p. 72). The play suggests that the bond that holds couples together is the isolation of each of the parties. Edward and Lavinia are described as: “A man who finds himself incapable of loving/And a woman who finds that no man can love her” (p. 82). Even after Lavinia returns home, the couple, neither of whom has ever seen the other for who he or she was, attain no more than a tepid *modus vivendi*, in which they recognize and accept their limitations. The end of the play shows them preparing for another cocktail party and talking about Lavinia’s dress (p. 125). The cocktail party with which the play opens and closes is the epitome of the couple’s social life and apparently what keeps them together. Their connection, by nature shallow and trivial, cannot be anything else.

Also in contrast to Euripides’ *Alcestis*, the theme of sacrifice is treated separately from the subject of marriage. Celia was not Edward’s wife, and at the time of the sacrifice she was no longer his lover. Moreover, her sacrifice was not a conscious decision, but an outcome of her chosen way of life. After her meeting with Harcourt-Reilly, who serves as the characters’ spiritual mentor, she goes to a faraway island to bring Christianity to the heathen. For her pains the natives crucify her, then later erect a monument to her, turning her into a saint. Her choice in life represents the spiritual path, in contrast to the earthly, material path of marriage.

In relation to Euripides’ *Alcestis*, *The Cocktail Party* takes two different directions. On the one hand, it trivializes the events of the *Alcestis* by turning Euripides’ great drama of death and revival into a banal domestic comedy. Lavinia’s departure does not have the absoluteness or emotional force of death, and there is nothing extraordinary in her return. On the other hand, Celia’s mission and crucifixion add a religious dimension, which is absent from Euripides’ version. Both changes bring the ancient myth into the modern world, which none of the other versions does.

Alcestis by Ted Hughes, shortlisted for the Whitbread Prize, was published a year after his death in 1999 and then performed in 2000 at the Northern

40 Page numbers are to Eliot (1978).

Broadsides Theatre under the direction of Barrie Rutter.⁴¹ Hughes had sent Rutter an unsolicited first draft of his translation in 1996, followed by his final version in 1998. The rewrite added the scene in which Heracles' labors and his freeing of Prometheus are re-enacted.⁴²

The rendition is termed both a translation and adaptation, indicating that the play is as much a revision of Euripides' drama as a translation. Hughes' rendition is an interpretative translation, with numerous plot interpolations and a completely different register and tone from Euripides' original. The distinguished scholar Bernard Knox vehemently excoriated the changes in register. He identified at least one hundred intrusive low register words, such as "shite hawks," "dung," "excrement," "ordure," etc., not found in Euripides' play, and complained that more than half of Hughes' text is spurious, with pieces of Euripides turning up here and there.⁴³

Like Wilder's *Alcestiad* and Palgrave's poem before it, Hughes' play depicts idealized characters for the purpose of mulling a philosophical point. Admetus is the model of the good king, Alcestis of the devoted wife. It is Apollo, not Admetus, who asks people to die for Admetus; he describes Admetus as "a savior of his people, an inspired prince" (p. 5).⁴⁴ The Chorus declare that he must live because he is the "good fortune" of Thessaly (p. 48), essential to the well-being of its people. Alcestis chooses to die in his place without asking him. Her motive, the Chorus tell us, is "selfless love" (p. 36). As in Palgrave's version, she believes that Admetus' life is more important than her own. Admetus thus cannot be faulted as selfish or cowardly. His moving expression of grief as he anticipates Alcestis' death must be taken as genuine. The depression he falls into after she dies conveys the bereavement suffered with the loss of a loved one. As Mendelshon points out, Hughes excises the excessive promise made by Euripides' Admetus to build a replica of his wife, and his treatment

41 It is unclear why Hughes chose to translate *Alcestis*, or whether he chose to translate *Alcestis* with a clear intention of having it produced on stage. Two non-exclusive motives have been suggested. One is that Hughes' friend Seamus Heaney had written his own version of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and Hughes wanted to follow with his own translation of a Greek tragedy. The other is that his version of *Alcestis* was driven by the 1964 suicide of his first wife, Sylvia Plath: see Marshall (2009) 273–4; Brown (2009) 294; Hardwick (2009) 56. Gervais (2001) 147 claims that there is "more Plath in the Electra of Hughes's *Oresteia* than in *Alcestis*". For other biographical associations in the play, see Mendelsohn (2000) 26–7, 30. Clanchy (2000) rejects reading the play for its autobiographical ties and insists that it be treated solely as "a work of art."

42 Marshall (2009) 272 and n. 30.

43 Knox (2000).

44 Page numbers for the text follow Hughes (1999).

emphasizes not “the husband’s readiness to accept a substitute for his dead wife,” as Euripides’ does, but “the husband’s fidelity.”⁴⁵

The play’s question, according to Mendelsohn, is not what type of man allows his wife to die for him, which is raised by Euripides’ play, but what kind of God insists on people dying. God, or the gods, in the play are identified not with salvation, but with nature and death. Death declares, “I am not a god. . . . What you call death/is simply my natural power. . . .”⁴⁶ The three Choruses, made up of Admetus’ friends, discuss the value of praying to God for Alcestis’ life. The first Chorus state that “As usual, God is silent/and lets it happen.” The third replies that “God only seems to be silent” (pp. 19–20). God is depicted as a jealous and oppressive deity who punishes Apollo for the efforts of Aesculapius (Apollo’s son) to heal the sick—that is, to prevent death—and binds and tortures Prometheus for giving man fire, essential to life. Heracles, born of a human mother, is depicted less as a saving deity than as a coarse, brawny, and bloodthirsty figure.

The enactment of Heracles’ twelve labors seems to have been motivated by the desire for spectacle. This is suggested by the fact that they were not included in Hughes’ first draft, but added after Hughes learned that the work would be performed on stage. It is also hinted at by the difference between the canonic order of Heracles’ labors and the order in which they are presented in the play. In the play, Heracles says that he is on his way to steal Diomedes’ horses, his eighth labor in the canon. However, he also goes on to describe the remaining four labors as though he had already performed them. Further spectacle is introduced by the enactment of Heracles’ freeing Prometheus instead of his bringing Eurystheus the cattle of the monster Geryon (pp. 68; 72–8). This change allows Hughes to show the vulture eating Prometheus’ liver.⁴⁷ Together, these facts suggest that Hughes was more interested in what the audience would be watching than in what they would be thinking.⁴⁸

45 Mendelsohn (2000) 29.

46 Mendelsohn (2000) 9.

47 Hughes also reverses the order of the killing of Cyrenean Hind and of the Erymanthian Boar. The classicists in the audience would be also bothered by the fact that before the description of the ‘new’ twelfth labor, the freeing of Prometheus, Hughes interjects Heracles’ killing of his wife and children. Euripides’ play on this subject was written and produced many years after the *Alcestis*, probably shortly before 415 BC: see Riley (2014). For a full discussion of this tragedy, see below, pp. 561–83.

48 Gervais (2001) 149, who saw the play performed in Soho, says of the scene with Heracles: “[t]he audience welcomed this comic relief but its effect was less jarring than it seemed.” He also writes of the scene as “answering Euripides but supplying an afterword to his own previous poetry.”

Like other renditions, Hughes' version deals with the theme of love. Although no mention is made of love in Euripides' play, the emotion is important for modern taste. Oddly, however, Hughes does not allow Alcestis to utter the word, even though Admetus declares that he loves her and suggests that her sacrifice was motivated by her love for him. Alcestis herself never states her motive. She is even more aloof, opaque and distant than her Euripidean namesake.⁴⁹

Ancient Greek tragedy was written in a high style, and Euripides maintained this style even though he wrote his *Alcestis* as the fourth play to be performed at the tragic festival. Usually a satyr-play, the fourth play, was in a low register, marked by considerable crassness. By lowering the register, Hughes made his version more similar to a conventional satyr-play. It is unlikely that this was his purpose. According to Hardwick, Hughes' knowledge of Greek was minimal and his concern, as always, was mainly with the English language and how it sounded.⁵⁰ Notwithstanding Knox's criticism, the style of Hughes' rendition found favor among some critics. It has been said, for instance, that "Hughes's poetic style is full of beauty and pathos."⁵¹ By and large, Hughes wrote his own poem based on the myth even as he relied heavily on Euripides' play. A creative poet should have the license to treat an ancient myth as he pleases.⁵² It may well be that the title of this free version should have not included the word 'translation,' which usually conveys much greater adherence to the original text. On the other hand, parts of Hughes' version closely follow the sequence of the original. Nonetheless, Ted Hughes's version can stand as a work independent of its source. Although it is not far from Euripides' play, it has its own agenda.

The various treatments of both the myth and Euripides' play vary in approach. The burlesques served as a platform for demonstrating their writers' wit and virtuosity, simultaneously showing considerable respect for Euripides while undercutting the values of sacrifice, marriage, and honor that are given serious consideration in his play. The Victorians followed with an infusion of earnestness, using both

49 Mendelsohn (2000) 29 maintains that Hughes' changes in Euripides' characterization, especially his smoothing over the inadequacies of Euripides' Admetus, were because "he wants his adaptation to be a grand dramatic and poetic statement of the human spirit, about mortality and the victory of love over death." Marshall asserts that Hughes' version can be seen as "a symbolist drama and the hero quest," Marshall (2009) 273.

50 Hardwick (2009) 58–9.

51 Kuo (1999).

52 See discussion by Hardwick (2009) 56–91. For some discussion of the relationship between the Euripides' *Alcestis* version and Hughes' poetry, see Mendelsohn (2000) 26–7; Gervais (2009) 318–23.

the myth and play as a platform for moralizing about the tenuousness of life and the supreme value of love and self-sacrifice, especially feminine self-sacrifice. The writers of the 20th century split their interest between the marital relationship and the nature and role of the deity. The writers also differed in their interpretation of the main characters. Whereas most of the writers idealized Admetus and Alcestis, the burlesque writers highlighted their shortcomings, while T. S. Eliot depicted a modern marriage bereft of love and passion. These and other variations indicate the vitality and enduring relevance of the myth and of Euripides' treatment of it.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

Early works of art focus on Alcestis' bridal chamber. An *epinetron* (a pottery female ornament) by the Eretria Painter (ca. last quarter of the 5th century BC) shows Alcestis in her bridal chamber leaning against pillows of a couch and surrounded by three women.

Admetus and Alcestis as a couple feature in Etruscan art. Unlike Classical Greek art, Etruscan art tends in fact to display images of married couples.⁵³ The couple is displayed on an Etruscan red-figure krater, a *skyphos* (a two-handled wine cup) and a bronze mirror, all of which date to 4th century BC. A tender scene of the parting of Alcestis and Admetus (with an inscription) is depicted on the krater (from Vulci in Paris). Alcestis clasps Admetus' neck while he holds his right hand under her arm. Demons representing the Underworld stand on both sides of the couple. The *skyphos* (Boston Museum of Fine Arts) shows a couple assumed to be Admetus and Alcestis. The man holds out his hand to the woman; there is a winged demon behind them. The bronze mirror (Metropolitan Museum in New York) shows a man and a woman embracing, with their lips touching, presumably representing their marriage.

Heracles' rescue of Alcestis from the Underworld is a popular scene in art. An Attic red-figure *kantharos* (a drinking cup with two high vertical handles) attributed to the Amphitrite Painter (ca. 5th century BC) shows Thanatos (Death) dragging Alcestis from the altar where he is confronted by Heracles with a sword. A painting of 4th century AD in the catacomb on the Via Latina, Arcosolium, shows Heracles leading Alcestis back from the grave to her husband. A drawing by Antoine Colpe, (ca. 1700), portrays Heracles returning Alcestis to Admetus. The French Louis Galloches' painting (1711) has Heracles

53 The Etruscan art featuring Admetus and Alcestis, described above, is fully analyzed and discussed by Bonfante (2010).

bringing Alcestis back, as does Eugène Delacroix' oil painting (1862) of Heracles carrying Alcestis back to her husband.

The scene of Alcestis' death is found as early as 360 BC on the sculpted marble base of one of thirty-six columns from the rebuilt Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, housed in the British Museum. Alcestis stands between Thanatos (?) and Hermes (?). A sarcophagus discovered in the 19th century, and housed at the Vatican in the Museo Chiaramonti (inv. No. 1195), illustrates three scenes from the myth of Alcestis.⁵⁴ It is dated between 160–170 AD. The depictions are on the front panel of the sarcophagus. The left scene illustrates Thanatos approaching thorough the entrance of the palace. The central scene depicts Alcestis leaning on her bed and turning her face away; Admetus holds her hand. Alcestis' daughter reaches with both hands to her mother, while the young son bends over next to the couch crying. Other figures surround her. The scene to the right displays the return of Alcestis. The *Death of Alcestis*, an oil-on-canvas painting by the neoclassical painter Jean-François Peyron (1785), shows Alcestis lying on her bed, with Admetus sitting next to the bed, holding their son with his left hand. Alcestis' right hand is on the boy's shoulder, while the boy touches his mother's upper arm. Two servants are on the left side of Alcestis' bed. In Jacques-Louis David's painting (1785), Alcestis has died. Her little son stands back as Admetus kneels by the bed. His head rests on Alcestis' shoulder while his hand grasps her upper arm. A maid is about to cover her head.

Music

Alcestis was a favorite of the opera. Only the mythic figure of Orpheus has inspired more operas than Alcestis.⁵⁵ Of the operas, the most notable are by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1674), George Friedrich Händel (1719), Christoph Willibald Gluck (1767), and Christoph Martin Wieland (1773).⁵⁶

The librettists focused mostly on marital love and self-sacrifice, and preferred to eliminate unpleasant scenes such as the quarrel between Pheres and Admetus, or the confrontation between Apollo and Thanatos (Death). There is an almost concerted effort to eradicate the selfishness of Admetus and replace it with a positive sentiment. Thus, Lully's opera *Alceste ou le triomphe d'Hercule* ("Alcestis or the victory of Heracles"), with libretto by Philippe Quinault, tells

54 This sarcophagus is discussed in detail by Kastelic (1999).

55 Parker (2003) 1 with n. 1. Thornton Wilder also wrote a libretto for an opera, *The Alcestiad*: see above, n. 26.

56 Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) lists numerous plays and operas in twenty-nine countries between 1539 and 2010 (<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/research-collections/performance-database>).

not only of the love of Alcestis for Admetus and her stabbing herself to assure his recovery, but also of Admetus' love for his wife. When Heracles, who is in love with Alcestis (cf. e.g., Wilder Thornton's *The Alcestiad*), agrees to bring her back from Hades on condition that she be his, Admetus agrees because he values Alcestis' life more than his own love for her. In turn, Heracles renounces his claim on Alcestis when he realizes her love for Admetus. Male magnanimity competes with Alcestis' self-sacrifice. On the other hand, Gluck's first version of *Alceste*, performed in Vienna to an Italian libretto by Ranieri de' Calzabigi, eliminates Heracles, and makes Apollo resurrect Alcestis. Gratitude to Apollo is thus underscored by having both protagonists owe him their lives.⁵⁷ In later versions of Gluck's opera Heracles is restored, although it is still Apollo who determines Alcestis' fate. In Wieland's *Alceste*, Admetus does not know about Alcestis' offer to die for him, and thus is exonerated. Wieland excises Apollo, Death, and Pheres altogether. Händel's three-act opera *Admeto, re di Tessaglia* ("Admetus, the king of Thessaly"), a libretto first written for the Venetian opera stage in 1660 but later revised, picks up on Euripidean Alcestis' request that Admetus not remarry after her death. Like other operas it retains Admetus' love for Alcestis and her self-sacrifice, but also her testing of Admetus' love and fidelity to her after her assumed death and secret resurrection.⁵⁸

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

The works of Wilder and Ted Hughes, as well as the burlesques discussed above, were all performed on stage. *Alcestis* did not receive many stage productions in the 20th century. The theme of a wife dying for an unpleasant and selfish husband is distasteful today, when there is little admiration for male domination. The earliest production of the *Alcestis* on the commercial stage in the US was by the Coburn Players in 1910.⁵⁹ For the next forty-five years, the play was performed in college and community theatres. It reappeared again on the commercial stage in 1955, when the Provincetown Playhouse of Greenwich Village put on Euripides' plays for two days. The play, using the translation by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, was produced with classic costumes.⁶⁰

57 Sternfeld (1966) 123.

58 Heller (2005).

59 For an excellent recount of the history of performance of the play on commercial stage, see Hartigan (1995) 111–24.

60 *The Alcestis of Euripides* an English version by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald. With decorations by Elizabeth Ewing. NY: Harcourt, Brace, 1936.

The play was mounted again in the 1970s without much distinction. In 1986 it was staged by the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, MA, following Robert Wilson's interpretation. Apparently very little of Euripides remained in this production. Wilson appropriated the text, changed it, added a prologue by Heiner Müller, and concluded it with a 17th century anonymous Kyogen farce, *The Birdcatcher in Hell*. Both added parts revolve around escape from death. The play was placed in a surreal world by the use of spectacular landscape and lighting. The latter "played as much a part in the action as did the actors".⁶¹ According to Foley: "He [Wilson] fragmented Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald's translation of *Alcestis*, adding interpolations from Müller or repetitions like the word "nothing," and diffused at times a sense of clear sequence or cause and effect, without in fact losing the general sense and progression of Euripides' text."⁶²

Screen

As for cinematic adaptation, there seem to be no movies clearly based on the *Alcestis*.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Alcestis*

The following works are comprehensive studies of the reception of Euripides' play:

Parker, L. P. E. (2003) "Alcestis: Euripides to Ted Hughes," *Greece & Rome* 50: 1–30;

Parker, L. P. E. (2007) *Euripides' Alcestis. Edited with Introduction & Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (xxiv–xxxvi).

Roisman, H. M. (2014) "Alcestis," in Roisman (2014) I: 339–44 (cf., also, entries on Reception).

Slater, W. N. (2013) *Euripides: Alcestis*. London: Bloomsbury.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

Literature

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61 Hartigan (1995) 122.

62 Foley (2012) 118.

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Mucznik, S. (1996) "The Alcestis Sarcophagus at Saint Aignan: A New Interpretation," in *Assaph: Studies in Art History*—Section B, Vol. 2: 1–12.

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Stage

The APGRD (Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama) performance and translation database (<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/research-collections/performance-database>) is currently the most comprehensive database worth of consulting.

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Medea

Rosanna Lauriola

Arguably, among the many figures from classical antiquity that have been exerting a continuing fascination for more than two thousand years, Medea has proven to be able to cast a specially enduring spell upon all of us, providing uncountable creative and intellectual challenges to thought and culture across centuries and across the world. The secret of her longevity and proliferation might be in her complexity, in her 'untamable' multifacetedness, which only Euripides could capture in his character masterfully, while making it elusive and overflowing any possible categorization. Her 'tragic' story starts when she fell in love with Jason, the 'conqueror' of the Golden Fleece, such an accomplishment that only the help of Medea made possible. For love of Jason Medea became enemy to her own father, family and her 'barbarian' country, Colchis. Medea left behind all her beloved and—according to the most known version of the story—she even killed her brother, only to help Jason, who, in return, made her his wife. Theirs was a sui generis 'marriage', sealed through an oath in gods' name rather than through a regular, standard ceremony. But it was enough for Medea, who kept engaging in questionable actions only to favor Jason's ambitions. Once Jason was given the chance to fulfill his ambitions without Medea's help, Medea was left alone, abandoned and banished. Here starts the tragedy of Euripides' Medea. In Corinth, where the couple and their two children took refuge after another of Medea's wrongdoings committed for Jason's sake, Jason could have the opportunity to gain a royal status by marrying the king's daughter. Medea is now in the way; she must be 'eliminated'. She is in fact exiled by the king. Her children, all she has, become a pretext for Jason for his 'move': they too can benefit from the new status. Hence, those same, innocent children become the pivot of the inner struggle of a woman in despair whose love for the man to whom she has completely entrusted herself turns into bitter resentment.

Euripides' Medea is a woman, a lover, a mother, a scorned and mistreated wife, a betrayed help-maiden, a witch and granddaughter of the god Helios, an exotic princess and marginalized 'other', a strong female able to stand against man and yet an abused victim of man, and . . . a murderer, namely, an infanticidal mother. Euripides' Medea is all these 'persons' and not one of them exclusively. Unfolding Medea's complex and multifarious essence is what, after all, has been left to posterity, and it is what characterizes the reception of this figure from antiquity to

our days. Although each work of reception privileges one or more features over others, anchoring them to each historical period in a way that resonates with thoughts, situations, and issues of the receiving society, the infanticidal mother is nonetheless what has universally stigmatized the image of Medea. It is this specific, and ineludible feature that makes Euripides' Medea as much disturbing as intriguing in any re-elaboration. Works of reception have attempted both to settle on how disturbing this feature is, and to determine whether other interpretations that would 'redeem' Medea are possible. Undoubtedly, reading Euripides' Medea and studying its diverse reception leave us with the impression that the poet has handed over to posterity the arduous task of casting a verdict.

In Literature

And, by the will of the eternal gods, the son of Aeson took away from Aeetes his daughter, after he had finished the many grievous labors, the ones that Pelias, the great and arrogant king, outrageous and violent doer of wrong, assigned to him . . . Having accomplished them, Aeson's son came to Iolcus, bringing the quick-glancing girl on the swift ship, and made her his stout bride. (Hesiod, *Theogony* 995–9; my italics).

These words by Hesiod mark, in the 8th century BC, Medea's debut in Western civilization.¹ Since the beginning she appears irrevocably linked to Jason, the son of Aeson, who went to Aeetes' kingdom, Colchis, to obtain the Golden Fleece, and thus to accomplish the 'labors' that his uncle Pelias put on him. Since the beginning she appears in the shadow of a man: Jason, that is, as the story goes, her husband. Her name, Medea, a powerfully evocative name, is not even mentioned. It is indeed Euripides, in the 5th century BC, who sanctions her emergence out of the shadow of Jason, whereas the Roman philosopher and writer Seneca (1st century AD) will redeem her from anonymity decisively: *Medea superest* ("Medea still remains," Seneca, *Medea* 166); [*Medea . . .*] *fiam* ("Medea . . ., I shall be," Seneca, *Medea* 171); *Medea nunc sum* ("Now, I am Medea," Seneca, *Medea* 910), the woman exclaims at any crucial point of the epilogue of her life with Jason.² Emerging out of the shadow of Jason, Euripides' Medea

1 An allusion to the expedition of Jason to Colchis on the ship Argo is in Homer, *Odyssey* 12. 69–72, but there is no mention of Medea. All translations, from any language into English, are mine, unless differently indicated in the footnotes.

2 Before Seneca, whose re-elaboration of Euripides' *Medea* is a milestone in Roman Literature, already the poet Ovid (43 BC–17 AD) has the heroine self-consciously imposing her own person declaiming her name. This is, indeed, peculiarly striking in the *Heroides* ("Letters of

does not perfectly fit the plans of the eternal gods which manifested themselves in an intervention of Aphrodites. As the Greek lyric poet Pindar (6th century BC) in fact says:

[Cyprogeneia...] taught the son of Aeson skills in magic prayers and incantations, so that he might rob Medea of any reverence for her parents, and instill in her a burning desire of Greece, with the scourge of persuasion. (*Pythian* 4. 215–9).

Interestingly, in Hesiod and Pindar, i.e., the two main authors who touched on Medea's story before her appearance on the Athenian stage with Euripides' tragedy (431 BC),³ Medea plays the standardized passive role reserved to women in classical antiquity.⁴ If in Hesiod she is quickly referred to as 'subject to/tamed by' Jason, through a verb which, in passive form, usually occurred to describe mere marital subjection (*δημηθεῖσα*: Hesiod, *Theogony* 1000), in Pindar her passivity surfaces in a more elaborated way, both by effect of magic incantation and by force of persuasion, which Aphrodite set up through Jason.⁵ Medea, who herself is expert in magic, thus seems to be entirely under the magic spell of the goddess of love. This motif will be fully exploited and explored by the 3rd-century BC poet Apollonius Rhodius in his epic poem *Argonauts*, which represents the first full narrative extant of Jason's quest of the Golden Fleece. In Hesiod and Pindar, Medea's autonomy—i.e., one of the features that makes her the great personage of Euripides' tragedy and marks in some way her otherness—is seriously curtailed.⁶ Something forces her to abruptly cut her ties

Heroines"), 12. 5, 25, where it takes the form of an heroic assertion, "I, Medea": see Bessone (1997) 13–4 (cf., also, Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7. 11, 70). On Ovid' and Seneca's adaptation, see below, pp. 383–8.

3 Although neither Aeschylus nor Sophocles wrote a *Medea* play, she was at the center of some of the two playwrights' lost works, namely in the role of sorceress: for a concise overview on Medea in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' *Fragments*, see Pellegrino (2008) 202, n. 4.

4 This is also true to her own lament on the unfair, inferior status of women, who are seen as a possession 'traded' from man (the father) to man (the husband), master of their body and will (Euripides, *Medea* 230–47). References to women's condition in ancient texts (i.e., to the silence, invisibility and obedience to male that were expected from them) are as uncountable as the scholarly discussions on the topic. To mention a few, see, e.g., Cohen (1989); Gould (2001).

5 In Pindar's text there is a reference to a specific magic practice, centering on a bird (the *lynx*: *Pythian* 4. 213–8, on which Johnston 1995), a practice that Aphrodite taught to Jason to make Medea madly fall in love with him.

6 Interestingly on the 'sarcophagus of Cypselos' (ca. 6th century BC) Medea is portrayed on a throne in the center, where on her right there is Jason, and on the other side Aphrodite; the

with her family: through Aphrodite's tools, Jason strips her of any respect (*αἰδῶς*) for her parents and 'stole her away' (*κλέψεν*: *Pythian*, 4. 250),⁷ although with her own help (*Pythian* 4. 250–1), or—one would say—with her consent (cf. *Pythian*, 4. 222–3). It is almost inevitable to feel some uneasiness in front of this oxymoronic, if not contradictory, information. Yet a closer analysis reveals the seed of the opposition between Medea's willingness to act and Aphrodite's driving of her action, which plays a major role in the confrontation of Medea and Jason in Euripides' play (*Medea* 446–535). More importantly, it brings into questions Medea's culpability in all the actions that drove her to the tragic outcome sealed by Euripides. Succumbing to Jason's spell by the will of Aphrodite, she loses any sense of home and any notion of familial obligation (cf. Pindar, *Olympian* 13. 52–4). It is in this 'blind-mad for love'-state that Medea starts a series of 'crimes' that grants Jason his safety (e.g., Euripides, *Medea* 476, 482, 515), up to his newly privileged position in the house of Creon, the king of Corinth where the couple and children take eventual refuge.⁸ And, ironically, it is because of this state that Jason deprives Medea of all credits when she exposes the injustice of Jason's return for her favors: Aphrodite only saved his expedition, and Eros, with his ineluctable arrows, forced Medea to save him (Euripides, *Medea* 528–31). But if in Pindar, Aphrodite, and in consequence Jason, is in the foreground with Medea being presented fully passive and fallible, in Euripides she gets the foreground as a self-aware woman who, by her own choice (l. 483), and acting with zeal rather than with wisdom (l. 485), has followed Jason. It is her self-awareness that, among other things, most marks her characterization in Euripides. Her self-awareness is not confined to her passion and feeling, but—and maybe foremost—extends to her condition as woman, fully aware (*γτιγνώσκω καλῶς*, "I know well," l. 228) of the man's top priority in marriage and of his being everything in a woman's life,⁹ according to the social conventions of the time. More importantly, she is fully aware of her gender's mistreatment because of those social conventions dictated by men. Women too—as she indirectly claims—indeed have an intellectual faculty (l. 230). This self-awareness tortures Medea throughout the tragedy, often surfacing

scene is described through an inscription which reads: "Medea gets married with Jason by the command of Aphrodite": see Simon (1961) IV: 427.

7 The verb is also given the meaning 'to carry off' and, as such, it may imply kidnapping/abduction. It seems to foreshadow the far different version of the story given by Herodotus (5th century BC) in the *incipit* of his *Histories* (1. 2–3), where Medea is one of a series of women whose abduction would cause the conflict between Greeks and Persians: see O'Higgins (1997) 120–1.

8 For a concise, yet detailed reconstruction of the whole story of Jason and Medea, see Mastronarde (2002) 44–57.

9 Cf. Ovid, *Heroides* 12. 162; see also below, pp. 383–4.

and struggling with her 'irrational' passion,¹⁰ and makes her an acute observer of women's state, one with independent judgment. And this self-awareness and independence of judgment, alongside a consequent lack of the expected resignation to her 'fate' of woman, certainly contribute to the 'otherness' of Medea, a thing that is beyond her different ethnic origin and that, as it will be seen, will transform her into a firm icon of modern feminism.

Those who 'picked up' from Euripides the story of Medea in the following centuries each developed the different strands constituting *the* Euripides' Medea, sometimes choosing to focus on different phases of her complex story-life. This is the case, for instance, in the most important narrative in Greek literature related to Medea after Euripides: the *Argonauts* by Apollonius Rhodius (3rd century BC).¹¹ As is well known, the epic poem is about the voyage undertaken by Jason, on the ship Argo, to conquer the Golden Fleece. Jason should have been its hero, but he is seen as lacking any real heroic virtues by almost everyone. Indeed Medea plays a major role as she appears, starting from Book 3, as the key-figure on whom everything depends. In Apollonius she is not the mature woman that we find in Euripides: she is the young girl that, after being reached by the arrow of Eros, upon Aphrodite's demand, falls hopelessly in love (Apollonius, *Argonauts* 3. 131–59, 275–98). It is the inner life of a soul placed under great distress that constitutes the key feature of Apollonius' Medea, drawn with a remarkable psychological insight and scanned through three monologues, in a *crescendo* of self-interrogations in front of which Medea's heart is, in the very end, *amechanos* ("without any answer/helpless," *Argonauts* 3. 771).¹² In his reception of Euripides' *Medea*, Apollonius seems to select and exploit the woman's propensity to inquire into her intricate mind, as she tries to not yield to the strong emotion of the moment, which is the fair resentment of a broken heart, in Euripides, and the increasing passion of a heart burning for love, in Apollonius. Where in Euripides Medea finally pours out

10 Last but not least see the famous monologue (Euripides, *Medea* 1021–80) announcing her deliberation about her children, and effectively sealed by her claim *μανθάνω* ("I understand," 1078–80). On the controversial interpretation of this monologue, see Mastronarde (2002) 388–97, with further bibliographical indications.

11 It must be noted that 'revivals' of Medea's myth occur before Apollonius' time. Indeed, in the late 5th and 4th centuries, Medea's story becomes a popular theme of tragedies and comedies, probably due to the fame of Euripides' play as well. For a concise survey, see Mastronarde (2002) 64–5; specifically with reference to the comic version of Medea's myth, see Pellegrino (2008) and his further bibliographical indications. The parodic version of Medea's story is not an exclusively ancient way of reception: burlesque transposition takes also place in mid-Victorian England: see Macintosh (2000) 75–99.

12 See Paduano (1972) esp. 10–60; Barkhuizen (1979).

her own contradictory, anguished feelings in one single monologue (1021–80), in Apollonius she probes her soul along three phases (3. 464–70, 636–45, 761–801). Here she centers her struggle on the contrast between two strong spiritual forces: *aidos* and *himeros*, i.e., reverence for her family and country, self-respect and sense of honor, on the one hand; desire and love for her fathers' enemy, on the other. Like a pendulum, her heart continuously swings back and forth from one devotion—the old one, for her family—to another—the new one, for Jason. Let that hero perish (3. 465–6) and marry a Greek woman in his fatherland (3. 639), for she, Medea, must be mindful of her family (3. 640): these are some of her thoughts. Yet they do not provide a resolution of her inner conflict: “Perish all reverence, all shame” (3. 785), Medea finally exclaims, unaware that she is fulfilling Aphrodite's intention to have Jason rob her of *aidos* for her parents—as we heard in Pindar. Inescapable as the god's will is, Medea is however aware that what she is going to do, yielding to her passion, is one of the “nameless dishonorable things” (3. 801). Whether or not she will yield to her passion, in one way or another, she would not escape disgrace and women's mocking (3. 791–9). Apollonius certainly takes this concern with the enemy's scorn and mockery from Euripides' *Medea*, and, interestingly, re-adapts it to the new socio-cultural context of the Alexandrian world, where a so-called shame-culture makes little sense. The coexistence of concerns for what others would say with the awareness that behaving in a certain way would mean carrying out ‘nameless dishonorable things’, and the subsequent reluctance, which implies a feeling of culpability, all of this testifies in fact to the transition from a shame-oriented culture, prevailing in the heroic/warrior society as mirrored in traditional models of epics (such as Homer), to a guilt-oriented culture, which would better fit one of the basic socio-cultural traits of the Alexandrian period, i.e., individualism. In the shame-oriented culture, what drives a person to do or not to do certain things is the fear of ‘losing face’ in front of the community, leading to a sense of shame. In the guilt-oriented culture, the driving force of action is an internal sanction, i.e., the consciousness of behaving against the moral code of one's society, therefore leading to an inner sense of guilt.¹³ More than once Apollonius' Medea seems to be restrained from yielding to her *himeros* (“desire, passion”) by the feeling of guilt surfacing at the idea of

13 Notoriously, Dodds (1951) has been the one who first applied the notion of shame-culture to the Homeric society and, more generally, to early Greek society, while admitting that a movement from the shame to the guilt-oriented culture already started during the archaic period. Traces of this transition can certainly be found in tragedy. On the ethics of shame and honor in ancient time see, also, Cairns (1993).

betraying her family. It is the voice of her conscience that mostly interferes with her *himeros*.

Aliudque cupido, mens aliud suadet ("desire persuades me one way, reason another": Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7. 19–20). By this words the Roman poet Ovid concisely refigures the inner struggle of Apollonius' Medea in the *incipit* of *Metamorphoses* 7. 7–424.¹⁴ This passage represents Ovid's last attempt to elucidate the story of Medea, here portrayed in her metamorphosis from a love-sick young girl to an accomplished witch and figure of evil.¹⁵ Ovid's reception of Euripides' tragedy unfolds in three different literary works: a lost tragedy, *Medea*; an epistle, which belongs to the collection *Heroides* ("Letters of Heroines"); and the above-mentioned large passage from the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁶ In rewriting the tragic story of Medea, Ovid combines Euripides with Apollonius and interacts with his own poetry in terms of intertextual allusions.¹⁷ Little is known about the lost tragedy, which seems to have been his 'version' of Medea's story closest to Euripides' play.¹⁸ The epistle (*Heroides* 12: *Medea to Jason*) presents Medea's entire career, up to her abandonment in Corinth, from her own point of view. Envisioned as the reaction of Medea to the marriage of Jason with Creusa (the daughter of Creon), Ovid here skillfully combines the *simplex puella* ("naïve girl") of Apollonius and the abandoned mature woman in despair of Euripides. The latter speaks with the same voice as the first. Memory (*memini* ["I remember"], 12. 3) is what reconciles the youthful and the mature Medea,¹⁹ in a

14 Ovid (1st century BC–1st century AD) is not the first Roman poet concerned with the story of Medea. The poets Ennius and Pacuvius (3rd–2nd century BC) re-wrote Medea's story respectively in the lost *Medea Exul* ("Medea exile," which bore a close resemblance to Euripides' play) and *Medus* (focusing on the events of Medea's life after her flight from Athens back—so it seems—in Colchis; for this play there is no Greek model). A little later, Accius (2nd–1st century BC) re-adapts Euripides' tragedy in *Medea sive Argonautae* ("Medea or the Argonauts"), of which only few fragments survive. It has been argued that these three poets, all of them coming from outside Rome, re-used Medea's myth centering on her otherness to explore issues of Roman identity: see Cowan (2010).

15 See Newlands (1997).

16 A reference to Medea's story is also in Ovid, *Tristia* ("Sorrows") 3.9, 26–34. To explain the name of the town Tomis, the poet reports the story of Medea's murder of her brother Apsyrtus, when she was fleeing with Jason from Colchis while being chased by her father. Tomis, etymologically linked to *tomos/temno* ("to cut up"), is where Medea—as the story goes—tore apart his brother's body.

17 See, e.g., Bessone (1997) 14–9.

18 Only two fragments survive: see Nikolaidis (1985); Bessone (1997) 14–9.

19 See Verducci (1985) 66–81.

present of regrets and suffering, on the threshold of the incumbent 'tragedy' (12. 212). Memory articulates and claims all the beneficial actions that the youthful Medea performed to favor Jason, now *immemor* ("forgetful," 12. 14). As in Euripides (*Medea* 446–535), this memory conjures her representation as a wronged lover and wife and prepares the ground for revenge. In *Heroides* 12 the revenge is only prefigured, while in *Metamorphoses* it is just hinted at (7. 394–8). In the narrative of the *Metamorphoses*, juxtaposing two far different stages of Medea's life—before and after the marriage with Jason—Ovid seems to be interested in emphasizing the metamorphosis that her character undertakes to implicitly invite the reader to question and reflect upon how such a change is possible. The first part of Ovid's narrative (*Metamorphoses* 7. 7–99) presents a sympathetic young girl who helplessly fell in love; in vain (*frustra*: 7. 11) she fought against her feelings, eventually yielding to them aware, in her heart, that not ignorance of the truth but love will deceive her (7. 92–3). The poet is here expanding Apollonius' portrayal to provide a psychological analysis of how passion may cause contradictory emotions and voluntary self-deception. With the passion for Jason being the driving force of action, following the 'journey' of Medea after her marriage with the hero, Ovid details her criminal 'favors', presenting her as an almost completely nefarious person, i.e., as the mature and accomplished witch that crystallized in the imagery of the following centuries. In this second and 'dark' section of the narrative (*Metamorphoses* 7. 160–396) Ovid expands what in Euripides remains implicit. The Greek playwright, in fact, downplays the woman's witchlike power, although the actions she performed thanks to that power contribute to her advocating for the justice of her claim over Jason. More explicitly in Ovid, those actions, too, no matter how they were performed, 'justify' the wrath of Medea. As in Colchis, so in Greece the very first impetus to use her magic power comes from Jason. Moved by Jason's tears for, and devotion (*pietas*) to, his father (*Metamorphoses* 7. 169), Medea exploits her magic with the assistance of Hecate to rejuvenate Aeson. And, as caught in a spiral that forces her to commit criminal actions (cf. *Heroides* 12. 131: "forced to harm"), she continues to harm Jason's enemy with her magic. And once herself harmed by Jason, Medea turns her magic power against him: she burned the new bride with her poisons and destroyed her palace. It is as if Ovid intends to represent how Medea, forced to do evil things because of her love for Jason, eventually grows in evil. His is a Medea *in fieri*. Significantly, while in *Heroides* 12 Ovid chooses to portray Medea's inner mind right before the 'tragedy' comes, in *Metamorphoses* he details her whole 'questionable career' until her flight from Athens, that is, beyond the 'tragedy' in Corinth, to elucidate what both in Euripides and Apollonius remains implicit, if not unsaid: the process of transformation that this woman undertook. That this might have been the center of Ovid's interest, above all in *Metamorphoses*,

can be proved by the fact that the 'acme' of *Medea* play—i.e., the woman's atrocious revenge through the princess's murder and, foremost, the infanticide—is just hinted at, condensed into not more than four lines (7. 394–8). Furthermore, Medea does not appear triumphant; she does not escape as a goddess, as at the end of Euripides' play. She fled the arms of Jason, i.e., his possible revenge. Her transformation into an evil witch is complete.

Analyzing this narrative in its relationship with other 'tales of marriage' surrounding Medea's story, and constituting a cluster in *Metamorphoses* Books 6, 7 and 8, might be a key for understanding this peculiar representation of the heroine by Ovid by restoring what the poet seems here to elide: the complex motivating factors that might force a woman to 'nameless, evil crimes'.²⁰ Procne, Scylla, and Procris, whose relationships end in familial betrayal and murder, are the center of the stories surrounding that of Medea. Together with Medea, they all are a refracted image of one complex type of woman, i.e., the woman that, displaced from her family and land, ends up suffering for the loss or lack of a husband's or lover's affection and, in consequence, actively seeks a remedy. Being denied a legitimate way to express their wishes and feelings, they turn to violence. Weaving the story of Medea in and out of those of Procne, Scylla, and Procris, Ovid seems to reflect upon the moral and social ambiguities of marriage, love, and filial duty that "involve the love-torn woman who chooses to speak and act independently", thus suggesting that women are "the prisoner of social conventions that fail to protect them".²¹ By implicitly relating Medea to them, the poet would suggest that her transformation, her turning from a love-sick, naïve girl into a evil witch, can be understood as consequence of a flawed social convention which denies women power and rejects them when and if they use it. Whether Ovid's reception of Euripides' *Medea* can be read in this way or not, it can safely be said that the poet leaves us with an ended-open story, almost avoiding a definite judgment, being interested rather in emphasizing the complexity of this mythic figure.

Quite different is the case of Seneca's re-elaboration of Euripides' *Medea* (1st century AD), in that the Roman author does not leave any room for doubts about the woman's nature and how to judge her. Seneca's *Medea* is evil to the core. Although fashioning his character with Euripides' tragedy in mind, Seneca might have been affected both by the dark representation of Medea in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and by the darkness of Nero's Rome. The latter, in particular, might have led Seneca to reshape Euripides' tragedy with such disturbing violence.²² Focusing on the exploration of the destructive power of

20 For further details about this approach, see Newlands (1997).

21 Newlands (1997) 207, and 203.

22 See Johnson (1988).

passion, Seneca presents Medea as a woman already consumed by anger and hate, for her love is rejected. His is an enraged and savage Medea, not—as in Euripides—a grieving one.²³ With and despite all her violence, a basic trait of Euripides' Medea is her 'humanness'.²⁴ Indeed, her violence is rather presented as a natural and understandable outcome of her grief. Paradoxically, even as she kills her children, Euripides depicts Medea as a loving mother who reluctantly undertakes that action (ll. 1019–80). This 'humanness' of Euripides' Medea is apparent in the feelings of pity and sympathy that she arouses in the 'inner' audience, the chorus. In Euripides the only one that criticizes Medea, and eventually calls her monstrous, is Jason, who is depicted as opportunistic, egotistical, and manipulative throughout the entire play. Differently, from the very beginning, and without any preamble, Seneca presents his Medea as already working on a plan for revenge of extraordinary brutality. In his re-elaboration Seneca reverses the order of presentation of Euripides' exposition: he first has Medea reveal her rage (Seneca, *Medea* 1–55); then he shows the cause by presenting his heroine as having been wronged by Jason who is about to marry another woman (ll. 56–115). As to what constitutes a central theme for both Euripides' and Seneca's tragedy, i.e., a mother's murder of her children, in Euripides that act is the almost-inevitable completion of the woman's justified vengeance, beside being also a way to protect her children from the hardship of exile and from possible harm by the people of Corinth (Euripides, *Medea* 74–5, 1060–1). In Seneca, where the woman is banished without her children (Seneca, *Medea* 144–5, 540–9), the murder is just the result of her search both for a sufficiently brutal punishment of Jason and for a satisfying revenge. Seneca's Medea kills her children since she realizes that Jason loves them very much; therefore their death would make him suffer very much (ll. 544–50). Sadism is the feature of this Medea: a victim—as she actually is in Euripides and overall in her myth—turned into a sadistic, criminal, mad beast.²⁵ Criminality and madness coupled with bestiality are in fact the attributes that Seneca highlights in his Medea.²⁶ Furthermore, if in Euripides Medea's femininity is emphasized through her representation as an oppressed woman who identifies her status with the hardships of common women (Euripides, *Medea* 230–51), in Seneca she is depicted as a 'man-woman' who pushes herself to cast away any womanly fear (Seneca, *Medea* 42). I would

23 For a detailed comparative analysis, see Roisman (2005).

24 March (1990) 38.

25 As far as sadism is concerned, it must be noted, for instance, that in Seneca's play Medea performs the killing of her children on stage.

26 Roisman (2005) 83–5.

think that in his reception Seneca has taken to extremes one of the features of Medea's 'otherness', i.e., her independence and standing for herself and her rights, her being capable of eloquently defending the justice of her deeds. These are all things that one would expect from a man only. If so, Seneca's intention is still to emphasize the nefarious nature of Medea. In erasing any femininity in his character, Seneca is probably driven by the attempt to answer the basic question that Medea's figure has posed since antiquity: how can a mother kill her children? The answer—at least Seneca's answer—is that no ordinary woman, but a witch, a man-woman driven mad by passion and turned into a beast, would or could. Contrary to Euripides' Medea, Seneca's is thus built to distance both her inner and outer audience from herself, preventing them from offering any sympathy. Almost in consequence, where in Euripides Jason is consistently discredited, in Seneca he appears as 'the good one' who sincerely would help Medea in her disgrace. His downfall is just a fair punishment for his betrayals of an oath: in this way he offended not Medea, but the gods, thus calling down their punishment. It seems that Seneca simplifies the dialectical relationship between good and bad by transforming his characters in one-dimensional figures. Such is his Medea. Seneca's Medea seems also to be a woman who desperately wishes to assert herself, her own identity, to free herself from the social constraints that demand that she adjust herself to the times, to the change of fortune (l. 175). Medea rebels against the rules of this 'game'. Fatherland, husband and power, all things are gone, all things but Medea: *Medea superest* ("Medea remains," l. 166). And from what is left ironically she *will become* a mother (l. 171), namely, a mother to herself. She gives birth to her new self, a new Medea capable of following her *ira* ("wrath, anger") wherever it leads her (l. 953), even to murdering her children. This is Medea: *Medea nunc sum* ("Now, I am Medea," l. 910) as she says, with some degree of metatheatricality, in the moment in which the helpless, injured, and insulted woman is finally revenged through her most horrific act.

One of the major differences between Euripides' and Seneca's Medea is the degree of her association with 'dark' witchcraft, alongside the degree of her sadistically vengeful nature. Differently than in Euripides, Seneca's Medea is on stage when the play opens, and her first words are "... a vindictive invocation of superhuman powers".²⁷ Dark divinities are indeed summoned by Medea to help her execute the revenge she has already clearly planned. Her

27 Corti (1998) 72.

practice of dark magic is described at length (Seneca, *Medea* 670–848), and her most horrific act is shown on stage (ll. 970–1, 1019).

For a while, being a witch and vengefulness, as defined by Seneca's play, were the core qualities of the several Medeas revived in the following centuries, in particular starting from the Renaissance.²⁸ General parallels, also, between Imperial Rome and the political situation of Renaissance Europe might have had some influence on the audiences' preference for Seneca over the 'democratic' Greek author.²⁹

One of the first most important re-elaborations of the story of Medea in modern times appears in early seventeenth-century France with the French dramatist, Pierre Corneille.³⁰ Written in 1635, Corneille's *Médée* is essentially the Senecan 'witch-Medea', adapted to the current socio-political context of France whose main anxiety, throughout the 17th century, pertained to sorcery. Witch-hunting was peculiar to that time, along with trials against persons suspected and accused of being a witch or sorcerer. A specific event might have inspired Corneille, i.e., the *affaire* of Loudon (1632–1634): a priest was found guilty of corrupting the Ursuline Sisters of Loudon and was executed by burning. From 1632 on the exorcism of the nuns became an ordinary practice. Corneille's play resonates with the current link between the allegations of Satanism and real-life oppression.³¹ He saw and depicted Medea as 'his time-sorceress' who had so far been executed by burning without undergoing a rightful trial, or after perfunctory and inaccurate trials. His Medea thus becomes the vehicle of his, and his audience's, anxiety about the Inquisition and the related contemporary judiciary culture.³² His position and critique is well expressed through the following principle:

Quiconque sans l'ouïr condamne un criminel, Son crime eût-il cent fois mérité le supplice, D'un juste châtement il fait une injustice.

28 Although there are some revivals of Medea's myth during the Middle Ages, it is above all with the 'resurrection' of classical studies in the early Renaissance that Euripides' tragedy, mostly mediated through Seneca, started receiving special attention: see, e.g., Purkiss (2005) 32–48.

29 Macintosh (2000) 7–8.

30 The first *Medea* on the French stage is that of Jean de la Peruse (1553) which, with its innovations, marks the beginning of a long French tragic tradition. But the very first *Medea* performed in the modern world is the Latin translation of Euripides' tragedy by the Scottish George Buchanan (1540s): Caiazza (1989) 15–6; Macintosh (2000) 8.

31 Macintosh (2000) 9.

32 See Carofiglio 1981; Caiazza (1989) 25–6.

He who condemns a criminal without first hearing him, even if the crime should merit torture a hundred times over, he turns a just punishment into an injustice (Act 2, Scene 2, ll. 400–2).³³

Corneille's play exerted a considerable influence on the following re-elaborations of Medea's story,³⁴ probably mostly due to its re-emergence in opera, in form of a libretto for Charpentier's *Médée* (1694).³⁵ Indeed, in the 18th century Medea's tragedy received special attention in music and opera, in particular in Italy, rather than in literature. In this same century noticeable also is its complete absence in a specific European area that could not but be proud of its own theatrical tradition, flourishing under the inevitable influence of the Classics: England. Here there were some important dramas in which Greek tragedy appeared in a 'disguised' way,³⁶ but some reluctance was shown with reference to Euripides' *Medea*. Euripides' heroine was found profoundly unsuited to the contemporary concept of femininity and sentiment. It has been noted that "each nation . . . fashion(s) a classical Greece in its own image."³⁷ The few tragedies elaborated in the English language in the 18th century, which were based on Euripides' *Medea*, in fact subjected the Greek model to a severe 'plastic surgery'³⁸ to make the heroine fit contemporary cultural and ideological imperatives. The central theme of the tragedy, what has stigmatized forever Medea, i.e., the deliberate act of infanticide, is the one that most needed to be refigured. Playwrights felt compelled to alter the heroine's character by improving her morality. The most successful 18th-century British re-adaptation in these terms is *Medea: A Tragedy*, by the English poet and politician Richard Glover (published in 1761; performed for the first time in 1767).³⁹ Finding it ideologically impossible to present a mother deciding to kill her own children, Glover 'fixes' the problem by having his Medea kill her children under the influence of madness. In a contemporary English court, Euripides' Medea would have been found guilty, while Glover's Medea would have been acquitted on the ground that she was suffering 'temporary phrenzy'. This was indeed the phrase used in real, contemporary cases of child-murdering mothers and presented

33 The lines are from the edition of Couton (1980).

34 See Caiazza (1989) 26–31.

35 See below, p. 411.

36 Hall (2000) 49–50.

37 See Mendelsohn (1973).

38 I borrowed the phrase from Hall (2000), on which part of my discussion is based as well.

39 Caiazza (1989) 34–8; Hall (2000) 53–5.

in court as evidence of the mother's state of mind to determine the degree of intent in the killing, and thus the degree of guilt.⁴⁰ In this way Medea's maternal love remains unchallenged: she would never kill her children in a sane state of mind. Furthermore, any doubt about her love for Jason is removed. Glover in fact emphasizes her grief for the loss of Jason, rather than her vengeful desire. Once Medea regains consciousness from her phrenzy, only the intervention of the goddess Juno impedes her from committing suicide. Medea then just departs into exile, after a touching dialogue with Jason, whom she still adores. Her virtues as mother and wife remain intact and Glover's Medea became a model for the 18th-century matron. Glover's reception of Euripides' *Medea* goes through a 'sanitizing' process.⁴¹ What has made this figure forever disturbing, problematic, challenging—yet sealing her everlasting 'spell'—has just been eliminated.

This sanitizing trend continues also in 19th-century England. Although the Victorians were much interested in what Euripides' *Medea* could say to them about divorce and the condition of the abandoned women, they nonetheless avoided the problem posed by the brutality of Euripides' handling of the infanticide.⁴² To a closer analysis, the removal of the horrific act is something more than a device to re-adapt the story to the taste and social imperatives of the time. Emphasizing that act as a defining mark of the original Medea means to keep posing the same question that, directly or not, all re-elaborations have to face: "How can a mother kill her children?." The plea of insanity (Glover's phrenzy) allows insight into the law for which Medea has been serving as a template for the legal representation and judgment of 'conventional' feminine conduct in the role of wife and mother. The Infanticide Act (1938), for instance, testifies exactly to a construction of a legal category from socially created expectations of women as care-givers for babies. Therefore a mother who kills her children must be mentally insane, "an isolated and biologically determined phenomenon, an unfortunate product of woman's 'nature'".⁴³ Going beyond a response to the contemporary social imperatives, Glover's alteration thus

40 Jackson (1996) 120–3, 142–3.

41 Interestingly some traces of what I defined above as 'sanitizing trend' can be found in some works of figurative art of the medieval and early modern ages where representations of the scene of Medea and Jason's marriage through the oath became most common and, ironically, they were taken as a symbol of ideal marriage. The scene indeed often appeared in love tokens and marriage gift like the Florentine *cassoni* ("marriage chest"): see Kepetzis (2010) 80–93. On the reception of this tragedy in art, see below, pp. 406–9.

42 In 1857 the Divorce Act passed in England, yet only with the rise of the movement for women's suffrage was Euripides' *Medea* allowed to be performed in translation rather than in its 'sanitized' adaptation: Hall (2000) 71.

43 Showalter (1987) 58. See also Hall (2010) esp. 22; Phillips (2010).

sheds light on reactions to the complexity of the human condition, as exemplified by the case of Medea, reactions that, with some degrees of difference, are shared by the following centuries. Most of the re-elaborations of Euripides' *Medea* have indeed attempted, in various fashions, to make her extreme action understandable and to question whether she was entitled to such a revenge.

The figure of Medea as victim of circumstances rather than agent of revenge dominates her portrayal in the reception of Euripides' play throughout the 19th century. This is the case, for instance, in *Das Goldene Vließ* ("The Golden Fleece," 1820), a trilogy by Franz Grillparzer, a distinguished Austrian playwright of the early 19th century. Adopting the Aeschylean trilogic form, Grillparzer retells, with some innovations, the whole story of the 'Golden Fleece', with a focus on Medea: from the very first stage of her 'tragedy', her being corrupted by her father's demand to use her magic to fraudulently kill the guest Phryxus, owner of the fleece (*Der Gastfreund*: "The Guest"), to her subsequent falling in love with Jason, upon his arrival to regain the Golden Fleece (*Die Argonauten*: "The Argonauts"), to finally her unfortunate marriage-life in Corinth (*Medea*). The latter was best known and performed as a separate play, in German and elsewhere.⁴⁴ Grillparzer's Medea is sympathetically presented by highlighting the sequence of events that almost inevitably led her to the crime, a sequence that is meant to redeem her from responsibility. What sets the sequence in motion is indeed her father's guilt: the crime against his guest Phryxus who, as he died, cursed him and his family. From that moment on Medea, as the trilogy shows, appears as "more and more entangled in a web of self-regenerating violence".⁴⁵ Grillparzer depicts his heroine as vainly attempting to free herself from that web, from her past, even from her ethnic identity in order to start completely anew. In the opening scene of the play, Grillparzer has Medea bury the chest containing her magical attire, the Golden Fleece, and the Colchian dark veil stripped off by Jason on their departure to Greece, but secretly kept by the woman. This opening scene, which symbolizes Medea's attempt to erase her past literally and metaphorically, conveys a cathartic message. She in fact aims at achieving inner changes and becoming a new person.⁴⁶ But everything works against her efforts. Interestingly, Grillparzer interweaves the representation of Medea as understandably driven to the extreme crime with the 'otherness' theme. Notoriously Medea's otherness has first been presented in ethnic terms through the last utterances of Jason against her in Euripides: "No Greek woman

44 On Grillparzer's *Medea* see Caiazza (1989) 58–76; Flashar (1991) 77–8; Macintosh (2000) 12–4.

45 Bartel (2010) 166.

46 Corti (1998) 134–7.

would ever have dared to do this" (*Medea* 1339–40). In various fashions Medea's otherness has been reshaped and emphasized in later versions, starting from Seneca through his focus on the evil witchcraft of Medea that alienates her from humankind, independently from her ethnic identity. Grillparzer sensitively re-proposes the otherness-feature in a way that resonates with contemporary racial stereotypes of the Jew, "the essential Other for German speaking lands".⁴⁷ The playwright—it has been suggested—uses specific references to clothing to address and question the notion of Greek and Other-barbarian⁴⁸ and to denounce, in some way, the racial discrimination and prejudice of his own time. Indeed clothes may work as carriers of meanings as they may refer to the historical and socio-cultural background of the weaver to the point of being able to shape the identity of the weaver himself.⁴⁹ Hence, the dress change of Grillparzer's Medea from a Colchian witch's outfit (which she has buried) into a Greek cloak, and back, is highly significant: it symbolizes her attempt to completely assimilate into the host-culture which, however, soon proves to be hostile. The king Creon is overtly racist, and Creusa, the 'rival' of Medea, who appears as an active character (ironically, as mentor of Medea in her 'Hellenization' process) mostly serves to underline Medea's otherness. Her blonde beauty and white veil are in fact the personification of 'Greekness'. Although benevolent toward Medea, Creusa nevertheless perpetuates the male order, which demands the submission and self-annihilation of female and ethnic other. In this role she thus represents a constant reminder of the impossibility of Medea's complete assimilation in Greek society. Creusa will end up not simply taking Medea's husband, but, and more importantly, turning the children away from her. By alienating her children from Medea, Creusa completes her abandonment, isolation, and exclusion from Greek society. In this way, while addressing racial discrimination, Grillparzer makes Medea's turn toward the terrible revenge as a result of compelling circumstances all the more convincing, understandable and almost justifiable. After ripping the Greek cloak into two pieces, a visual sign of her resignation to the impossibility of integration with the rejecting host-culture, Medea, now metaphorically naked, can only retake her old, yet original Colchian witch's outfit from the chest she vainly buried. In this way she goes back to be 'once more Medea'. Echoing Seneca's *Medea nunc sum* ("Now, I am Medea," l. 910), she says: "Once more I am Medea" (Grillparzer, *Medea* Act 4) in the moment in which she re-appropriates her Colchian dark veil and her magic charms. And this action is a clear prolepsis to the predictably dark ending of the story. Grillparzer's

47 Corti (1998) 128. See, also, Macintosh (2000) 19; Bartel (2010) 169.

48 See Bartel (2010).

49 Barthes (1983) 8.

Medea ends up being a tragedy of the victimization of women who are also outsiders, ethnically 'others'. Medea is such a victim. Her fight against hostile circumstances and her inevitable end in accomplishing crimes for her father's guilt also give her an Oedipal nuance. There is neither final triumph nor a real revenge, simply Medea's thoughts on her own misfortune and destiny along with those of others. Her final words, uttered in exile in a fortuitous encounter with Jason, are indeed "Bear it . . ., Endure . . ., Atone . . ." (Grillparzer, *Medea* Act 5).⁵⁰

Grillparzer sets the 19th- and early 20th-century trend of presenting Medea both as the abandoned wife and as 'other/outsider' *tout court*. The growing support for the emancipation of women in Europe contributes to changing focus on Medea whose suffering for the betrayal of Jason becomes more significant than her infanticidal revenge. These social-political factors are echoed in Ernest-Wilfrid Legouv  s *Medea* (1854). This French dramatist's play represents the most important 19th-century version of Euripidean tragedy, after Grillparzer.⁵¹ Similar to Grillparzer's Medea, Legouv  s heroine is an abandoned, homeless wife who also has to endure the humiliation of being rejected by her children, attracted, as they are, to material comforts and the security of Corinth. Doubly isolated, being far away from her home and even deprived of her Nurse, doubly humiliated, in private and in public, this helpless Medea is eventually driven to the act of infanticide as it was "both just and necessary", as it was stated by the only actress, Adelaide Ristori, who agreed to perform this Medea.⁵² Legouv  s Medea soon becomes an icon of 'proto-feminism' in the second half of 19th-century England when, as hinted at above, divorce becomes a main object of discussion in contemporary political life.

While Legouv   exploits one of the two threads deriving from Grillparzer's version, i.e., that of an abandoned Medea whose maternal love is not under discussion and understandably driven to the extreme act, the North German novelist and dramatist of early 20th century, Hans Henny Jahnn, is the first to explore the other thread by drawing on the figure of Medea as 'other/outsider', in his play *Medea*, first put on stage in Berlin in 1926. The concern with Medea's foreign ethnicity indeed becomes dominant in the re-adaptation of the myth, starting above all from the 20th century when, with the rise of Nazism, racial issues are paramount.⁵³ In Jahnn's play Medea becomes a black woman and her children are mulatto. They are rejected precisely because of their skin color.

50 My translation of Grillpazer's passages is based on Miller (1913–1914) 317 and 336.

51 Macintosh (2000) 14–7.

52 Ristori (1888) 203; also Macintosh (2000) 15.

53 On this re-elaboration by Jahnn, see Vedrenne (1986) 99–100; Caiazza (1989) 98–101; Macintosh (2000) 21.

If Grillparzer introduces the problem of the encounter and clash between Greek and Colchian culture and society, Jahnn makes the racial concerns more overt by introducing the issue of skin color. The interracial strife is also interwoven with Oedipal rivalry. In Jahnn's re-working of Medea's story, the older of Medea's two children (who here are grown youths) collides with his father over Creusa. In her revenge Jahnn's Medea recalls Seneca's more closely. But the infanticide—or, better, filicide—is dictated by Medea's wish to spare her children from racial injustice, both present and future.

Anxieties about racial identity lie behind the French playwright Henri-René Lenormand's adaptation, *Asie*, appearing a few years later (1931). Written in prose, the transposition in modern time is complete, from the character's names to the places. Colchis becomes the kingdom of Sibang, an Asian-Indochinese state under the French government, while Greece becomes France and symbolizes the colonizer Europe. Jason (Monsieur De Mezzana) is an ambitious French colonizer, and Medea is an Indochinese princess (Katha) who, conspiring against her own father, helped the Frenchman to subjugate, and so colonize, her people. Colonialism and related abuse of the colonized thus constitute another important thread of Lenormand's version, strictly linked to the racist undercurrent. A 'French wife' is in fact preferred to the Asian one who, in some way, is once again deprived of her children. The theme of the infanticide is re-shaped in a way that addresses both racial and colonial concerns through a motif that appears here for the first time and symbolizes the abusive intrusion of the colonizers. The latter are in fact portrayed as those who strip the colonized of their ethnic essence under the pretext of liberation and progress. The new motif is the technology, i.e., the machine-culture through which colonizers claim to 'civilize' 'primitive', and thus 'wild', societies. The children of French Jason and Indochinese Medea in Lenormand's play, who were left for a while in the care of missionaries, appear as almost already assimilated to the 'civilized' European culture, which contributes toward alienating them from their mother. Medea-Katha feels thus compelled to protect her children not only by sparing them the pains of racial discrimination: once in France the children have in fact difficulties in school because of their skin color; they soon become the object of ridicule from their classmates. She also wishes to spare them from becoming the slaves of an imperialist and industrialized society. Giving death to them is, for this Medea, giving them peace and liberation.⁵⁴

54 On Lenormand's *Asie* see Belli (1969) 161–71; Caiazza (1989) 101–3; Macintosh (2000) 21, more recently Van Zyl Smit (2014) 159–60. Many of the themes that Lenormand takes up in his play are then explored by the American writer Maxwell Anderson in his re-adaptation of Medea's story in *The Wingless Victory* (1936). Set in Salem about 1800, Anderson's

While Lenormand's adaptation of Medea's story emphasizes the contrast between the 'civilized', technological Western world and the 'primitive', wild East, putting into the foreground colonial and racial concerns, the American poet John Robinson Jeffers' adaptation of the tragedy in the poem *Solstice* (1935) singles out the antithesis between conservative primitivism and subversive progressivism within the Western world itself.⁵⁵ Set in a ranch close to the Rocky Mountains, the *Solstice's* Medea first rebels against her husband's decision to turn the ranch into a modern tourist center. Deprived of her children and banished from the ranch, Jeffers' Medea turns her rage and revenge against the machines symbolizing corrupting technology and progressivism. Like Lenormand's Medea, she kills her children to save them, in some way, from becoming slaves to the comforts and technological devices of modern civilization that are destroying the world. By adapting the figure of Medea to his own pessimistic and anti-progressive notion of life, Jeffers has Medea convey both feminist and ecological/environmental concerns. This is the result—I would think—of Jeffers' peculiar reception of the different ethnic identity of the Greek model: the Colchian Medea coming from a 'barbarian', thus primitive world. As it will be seen, in fact, besides being re-adapted to address racial issues, the different ethnicity of Medea becomes also, in some of the later re-adaptations, a vehicle for expressing environmental issues through concerns about the advances of technology and the increasing industrialized world that embodies the essence of Western Civilization. *This* world and civilization are symbolized in turn by

version concentrates in particular on racial prejudice, with a focus on that cultural-religious movement that had a deep effect upon the national character, i.e., Puritanism: see Belli (1969) 171–83; also, Foley (2012) 204–7; Van Zyl Smit (2014) 161–2.

- 55 Jeffers wrote also a tragedy entitled *Medea* (1946), which is closer to the Greek model than the poem *Solstice*, as it is 'another version' of Medea the abandoned woman: see Macintosh (2000) 24. As Foley (2012) recently points out, however, Jeffers' play also addresses the 'otherness' issue, with an emphasis on Medea's 'barbarism', alienation, and isolation, and conveys a critique of "the oppressive aspect of democracy, which include dehumanizing Asian others..." (p. 209). Foley argues that "(Medea's multidimensional) otherness" is actually the theme that defines, since the beginning, "the central trend in Medea's American reception", alongside her 'acting like a man' (p. 193). With attention to performative features of Jeffers' *Medea*, still Foley (2012) 207–10. A different reading of Jeffers' *Medea* is provided by Richardson (2005). Controverting the critical opinion on the apolitical nature of this play, the scholar argues that Jeffers adapted Euripides' tragedy in way that it turns into a polemical comment on the decline of contemporary Western society, in particular on the atomic bomb and the U.S. involvement in the Second World War. Indeed, this polemical tone, with the progressivism of Western society being the target, seems to be consistent with the features of his poem *Solstice*, as described above.

Jason's life style, choices, and social 'climbing'. Whether Jason personifies the modern technological world, the First World, or the oppressive and racist ideology legalized by white society, the diversity of Medea becomes of such a crucial importance in modern adaptations of the tragedy that, at times, it appears as a central feature, reshaped in a way to address not only ethnic, but also self-identity issues against the background of marginalization within one's own culture. The Medea of Jeffers' *Solstice*, 'different' for her refusal of modernity, is in a way marginalized in her own culture, too.

This theme of being marginalized in one's own culture characterizes an interesting reworking of the tragedy in one of the best known 20th-century adaptations in Latin American dramatic literature: *Medea en el espejo* ("Medea in the Mirror," 1960) by the Cuban playwright José Triana. Triana's Medea is a mulatto woman, Maria, abandoned by her white lover who, to improve his social status, decided to marry the daughter of a local political boss. For revenge, Medea-Maria poisons both the boss and his daughter, during the wedding festivities. She then kills her children to punish her lover thus cutting any bond with her white oppressor. The theme of marginalization is the central one at the expense of the infanticide motif: Maria is a marginalized person in her own culture and native land, and the sense of grievance by this Latin American Medea is connected to the perception of her marginality.⁵⁶ Her sense of identity is distorted by the racial politics of her society, where *tener el pellejo prieto es una disgracia* ("to have dark skin (...) is a misfortune," Triana, *Medea* 27).⁵⁷ It is her denial, that is, her incapability to see and accept, at first, her own identity as Cuban mulatto woman that sets in motion her tragedy and leads her to extreme actions. And yet, these extreme actions end up being liberating and empowering. The realization and acceptance of her marginal state in fact lead her to finally assert her Afro-Caribbean identity, thus rebelling against white oppression and white racial and social values. The mirror, a 'magic' object used in some Afro-Cuban religions "to locate the whereabouts of a missing person,"⁵⁸ is what returns to Maria her real identity. Looking at her real self, experiencing a spiritual transformation, this Medea regains finally a sense of self-reliance and finds the courage to break the shackles of oppression and to be in charge of her life. The cost of this self-liberation and re-appropriation of her real self is high: she must cut any bond with her past and her 'old', delusional self-image. Like any 'traditional' Medea, she kills her children, too. But she did it while caught in a fit of madness, if not *delirium*. As it has been seen, madness, that is, mental illness in modern terms, is often called down to

56 Garcia (1996).

57 Page number refers to Triana (1960).

58 Ortiz (1973) 113.

make acceptable or justifiable Medea's extreme act. In terms of political discourse resonating with the socio-political context of the time of its composition (i.e., the Cuban revolution in 1959) Triana's *Medea* also poses questions about the issue of authority and denounces the suppression and discrimination of the black under Fidel Castro.⁵⁹

Racial discrimination, combined with the question of gender, characterizes several, if not all, re-adaptations of Euripides' tragedy in South Africa.⁶⁰ In particular, Medea becomes the symbol of those oppressed by apartheid. The 'otherness' of Medea takes here the form of racial exclusion. The first adaptation of this kind, which addresses concerns of race, gender, exploitation, and colonization by critically referring to the apartheid system, seems to be the play *Demea* by South African poet Guy Butler, written in the earlier sixties. Because of its attack on official government policy, it could not be performed until 1990. In particular, the need of a multiracial cast and the focus of the plot on a love relationship between members of different racial groups prevented this play from being performed at the time.⁶¹ The story is set in the late 1820s in the Eastern Cape and centers on the marriage between a local princess and a British officer, who turned into a trader. He got already married once only to advance his business; now, he is ready to remarry for the same purpose again. Butler adapts the tragedy of Medea in a way to explore the pressures that colonial mixed marriages were undergoing. In this adaptation, too, the infanticide is a 'necessity'. The colonial pressures are such that the mother sends her children to a known death 'to save' them from the racial oppression by the

59 See the related detailed analysis by Nikoloutsos (2012), who also explores the connections of Triana's play with Seneca's *Medea* that have been so far disregarded by scholars. Garcia's analysis (1996), too, engages with political discourse although at a cultural level, in that the marginalization of Triana's *Medea* would resonate with the marginalization of Latin American theatre, which struggles "at the margin of the polis of the canon" (p. 146). Hence, the Latin American cultural idiosyncrasies, which shape this play, disclose a critical response to the hegemonic (western) canon (p. 149).

60 Valuable studies on the reception of Classics in South Africa are by Betine van Zyl Smit (see, e.g., 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). Racial discrimination, gender and ethnicity issues are to be found, among the others, in some recent Brazilian adaptations as well: see, e.g., Coehlo (2013); Dos Santos (2015). The otherness and the connected themes of marginalization and exclusion, implied in Euripides' *Medea* and 'exploited' in many of the modern re-workings, have been, in turn, re-adapted to convey issues pertaining to sexual identity: such is the case, for instance, of *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* by Cherrie Moraga (1995), on which see Eschen (2006) 103–6; Straile-Costa (2010). About Fisher's musical, see, also, below, pp. 413–4.

61 On Butler's adaptation, see Wertheim (1995–1996); also, Macintosh (2000) 27–8.

ideologies of apartheid. The children's killing is, in the end, an act of love, paradoxical as it sounds. This oxymoronic combination of maternal care with the act of murdering one's own children, in some way already seen in the outcomes of some of the adaptations analyzed above, ends up being a common motif in several modern remakes of the Medea's tragedy.

A critical response to the authority of the 'White' and his colonizer culture informs Heiner Müller's remaking of Medea's tragedy, *Medeamaterial*, within a trilogy constituted by *Despoiled Shore*, *Medeamaterial*, *Landscape with Argonauts* (1982).⁶² They are written as three distinctive pieces mostly in the form of monologue.⁶³ They follow the full trajectory of the story of Jason and Medea, from their encounter in Colchis to beyond the events in Corinth, i.e., to Jason's struggle to come to terms with a far different world, after Medea's 'crimes'. These crimes, in Müller's remaking, are a response to the violence of colonialism personified by Jason, rather than a reaction to her rejected love. Medea's murder both of her children—the product of her service to Jason as a slave—and of Jason's new bride are a form of political rebellion against the oppressor colonizer, the white Greek conqueror who has taken Medea along as his ally, but also as his slave, and corrupts wherever he goes with his version of civilization. Medea's story is an allegorical critique of western civilization which begins with colonization and is doomed to self-destruction: colonizers exploit the colonized and the earth is abused by man; as the colonized turn now against the colonizers, so the earth turns against her abusers. Each victim turns the tables on the aggressor.⁶⁴ The play ends with a hopeless foreshadowing of a complete annihilation through the image of an airplane dropping bombs. This also speaks to a real anxiety about nuclear destruction. The final explosion of the bomb is "the logical climax of a narrative sequence that is thematically preoccupied with various political problems of modernity",⁶⁵ such as alienation, technological over-development, environmental degradation, capitalism and so forth, all products of Western civilization.

62 Back to Europe, from Jeffers' *Solstice* (1935) to Heiner Müller's play (1982), there have been several noteworthy re-workings of Euripides' tragedy, with and without the mediation of Seneca. Undoubtedly Jean Anouilh (*Médée*, 1946), to mention at least one, occupies a prominent place in the canon of 20th-century re-adaptations of the story: see Macintosh (2000) 25–6; Walton (2009) 205–7.

63 Müller has been inspired by Medea more than once. In 1974 he wrote *Medeaspiedel* ("Medea play"): see Macintosh (2000) 25–6. As to the above-mentioned trilogy and in particular *Medeamaterial*, see McDonald (1992); Rogowski (1993); Campbell (2008) and (2010) 69–70 (with a focus on the 'post-dramatic' feature of *Medeamaterial*).

64 McDonald (1997) 298–9.

65 See Kvistad (2009).

Interestingly, despite all the significant differences in Medea's treatment by Triana and Müller, especially the completely different historical, socio-political, and cultural background, a common thematic denominator can be identified—so it seems to me—in the woman's recognition of her betrayal of her own cultural identity, because of her complicity, in the first place, with the 'white' male system of oppression, a complicity where the children serve in a way as catalyst. Hence the 'necessity' to eliminate them arises. As in Euripides, so in these authors it is not simply a question of punishing Jason, the oppressor, the colonizer, the abuser, etc. It is necessary for Medea to assert her new self, a thread that will continue in several of the following re-workings.

But as in Euripides so in many modern re-adaptations, the infanticide regains its crucial centrality, appearing also as a necessity 'oxymoronically' dictated by the mother's love and care, a motif that has already been seen in some of the cases discussed above. This motif is of paramount importance in the remaking of Medea's tragedy by the American playwright and poet Toni Morrison, in the form of a novel: *Beloved* (1987). It is the story of a black-slave woman, Sethe, based on the true story of an escaped woman, Margaret Garner (1855). Garner was named 'Modern Medea' in the contemporary press. She killed her daughter and committed this crime with a specific intention: to keep the girl from being returned to slavery, once she, the 'Modern Medea', had been reached by the slave-catchers.⁶⁶ Slave of a man, referred to as 'school-master', Sethe reacts to the dehumanizing racist practices of her master by escaping with her own children. Once she is captured again, as an Aristotelian tragic heroine whose actions are a re-action to intolerable circumstances, Sethe attempts to save her children from the cruelty of slavery and racism by killing them. "Nobody was going to list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper" (*Beloved* 251),⁶⁷ Morrison says of Sethe-Medea as she decides to kill her children. It refers to one of the many brutal, racial experiments of the school-master who has instructed his pupils to observe the 'human' and 'animal' traits of his slaves. Sethe, whose black motherhood, i.e., her nurturing white babies first, as a cow with her milk, is inscribed on the 'animal side of

66 See Weisenburger (1998). The name 'Modern Medea' was actually given by the painter Thomas Satterwhite Noble, who portrayed the episode eleven years later (1861). The painting represents the woman confronting the slave-catchers over the bodies of two of her children, with the other two sons clinging to her skirt and begging to be spared. The painter adapted the traditional Medea to his portrayal of Garner by simultaneously representing the killing of the sons and their appealing for mercy to the mother. On Morrison's novel and the comparative reading with Euripides' *Medea*, see, in particular, Corti (1992); Haley (1995); Emmett (2010). My analysis draws from these studies.

67 All quotations are from Morrison (1988).

the paper' (*Beloved* 200; 251), succeeds in killing only the baby girl, the *Beloved*. Sethe's is an act of love; she cannot stand to expose her daughter to suffering that she herself could not bear to endure. Through death she gives her a freedom that she herself could not enjoy. Moreover, by giving death to the one to whom she has given birth, Sethe asserts that the baby belongs to her, reclaiming control at least over her child's destiny. The ghost of her dead baby girl soon starts haunting her. This haunting ghost is indeed the issue "of an overwhelming grief commensurate with her mother's bondless love".⁶⁸ This maternal love motif, which marks Sethe's infanticide, is the product of a peculiar reception of the Euripidean Medea's infanticide. It thus provides another link to the Greek tragedy besides the motif of infanticide itself. Although in Morrison Jason's betrayal, a crucial point in Euripides, is not present, both Sethe and Medea are placed in a situation in which the father's care and protection is absent. Parental powerlessness is a concern of both women. In Euripides, Jason's claim that his new marriage serves to provide his sons with a better status (Euripides, *Medea* 559–60) is weak for several reasons: 1. Jason's himself doubts that Creon will let the children stay (Euripides, *Medea* 941); 2. There is no proof that the stepmother will care for them; on the contrary, entrusting children to the care of a spouse who was not the real parent was commonly discouraged;⁶⁹ 3. Under Athenian law, in particular the law of citizenship as established by Pericles in 451 BC,⁷⁰ according to which only those born of parents who were both citizens could enjoy Athenian citizenship, Jason cannot guarantee the legitimacy of his children; on the contrary, he can deny it to them and deprive them of the right of heredity. At best they could only claim a status as half-brother of princes.⁷¹ Medea is well aware of this and therefore fears that her children will fall prey to her enemies' insult (Euripides, *Medea* 1060–1). Moreover, by sending the fatal dress to Creusa through her children, Medea makes them accomplices, thus exposing them to the vengeance of the people of Corinth. Killing them means 'to save' them; it almost becomes a necessary act of love.⁷² And,

68 Corti (1992) 70.

69 See, e.g., Euripides, *Alcestis* 309–10, where the dying woman warns her husband about the dangers of remarrying on the ground that the stepmother would not be kind with children born from the first marriage. See, also, Corti (1992) 65. On this stereotype of the stepmother, see below, pp. 443–4; 446 n. 10; 455 n. 44.

70 Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution* 26.4; Plutarch, *Life of Pericles* 37.3.

71 On the unconvincing nature of Jason's argument, see also Knox (1977) 202.

72 It is something that psychologists call 'altruistic filicide': Arkins (2010) 191. As such it reappears in a recent Irish version of the tragedy, *By the Bog of Cats*... (1998) by Marina Carr, whose abandoned Medea (Hester Swane), a traveller, and thus an outsider in Irish society, eventually kills her daughter to prevent her from being in a world without her

as with Sethe, so Medea's maternal love is not in question. Last, but not least, Morrison draws also on the theme of 'otherness' and related racial prejudices, provocatively raising questions about who the real savage and 'barbarians' are. These are questions that Euripides, too, poses in a way. And 'otherness', as has often been pointed out above, is also, if not foremost, concerned with 'womanhood' in ancient as well in modern times.

The motif of oppression and exploitation of the woman-other, as we have seen, is frequently re-proposed with a political shading in reference to colonialism. As such, it reappears, for instance, in 20th-century Ireland, where the revival of Greek drama has been occurring, since 1975, with a stress on the experience of women, and with a more or less overt reference to the 'Irish Trouble'.⁷³ As for Euripides' *Medea*, one of the most acclaimed remakes is that of Brendan Kennelly: *Euripides' Medea: A New Version* (1991). This play mainly deals with "the exploitation of women by men, Ireland by England, and the vengeance lurking in the rear of exploitation".⁷⁴ As a woman exploited by a man, Kennelly's *Medea* is a story of rage rather than of jealousy. She speaks for all women who have ever been 'ditched', and thus stands for all 'jilted', beaten up' women. She represents the real strength of woman, "the strength that for centuries has been subdued" (*Medea*, p. 5).⁷⁵ Kennelly's *Medea* is indeed to be read against the reality of marital breakdown in Ireland and the discussion about divorce occurring there in the last decades of the 20th century, as it advocates for women's emancipation. At the same time it also resonates with the political situation of the country in its relationship with the colonizer England. Medea's and Jason's love/hate is a metaphor for modern politics, too. The betrayal can thus be seen on the political, and not only the personal, level: "Betrayal is the ripest crop in this land. The more it is slashed, the stronger it grows" (*Medea*, p. 13). Medea's rage and rebellion is the reaction of Ireland to England, where Jason's attempt to 'tame' her represents the abusive, colonizing Englishman who preaches Protestant virtue to the barbarian woman. Medea's extreme love, on a political level, becomes a metaphor for the extreme

mother who has decided to commit suicide. It has been argued that this ending mirrors what was happening in contemporary Ireland, that is, the frequent death of children at the hands of suicidal parents: McDonald (2005) 130. On Carr's play, see, also, Arkins (2010) 190–2, and below, n. 73.

73 See McDonald-Walton (2002). As to revivals of Euripides' *Medea* in the context of the 'Irish Trouble', including Kennelly's play which is discussed above, see McDonald (1997) 305–12; Arkins (2010) 189–90. Namely on both major Irish versions, i.e., Kennelly's and Carr's *Medea*, see, also, O'Brien (2012).

74 McDonald (1997) 304.

75 All quotations are from Kennelly (1991).

nationalist love for the country with its ensuing horror: murder. The crime of Kennelly's Medea reflects the crime that any country commits: to send out its children to fight and to die.

Crucial, as we have seen, to almost all the re-adaptations of Euripides' *Medea*, the infanticide motif is, instead, completely rejected in the modern re-telling of Medea's story by the East German writer and essayist Christa Wolf in her novel *Medea. Stimmen* (1996): *Medea. Voices*.⁷⁶ As the title suggests, the novel consists of a plurality of 'voices', i.e., characters, including Medea, who, in form of monologue, 'voice' their own 'version' of the story by expressing their own view of Medea. Built on a different tradition than the one followed by Euripides, Wolf deprives Medea of what, in the end, has generated her notoriety: the act of infanticide.⁷⁷ Once she receives the order to leave Corinth, she entrusts her children to priestesses in the temple of Hera; soon they are taken by the Corinthian mob and put to death. Wolf's Medea is also innocent of the other murders traditionally ascribed to her that turn her into a 'savage monster': the killing both of her brother Apsyrtos and of the princess of Corinth, new bride of Jason. In Wolf, Medea's brother is 'ritually' murdered at the command of their father Aeetes, by way of stratagem, to allow Aeetes to maintain the political power. As for the princess of Corinth, she commits suicide, unable to bear the memory of what happened to her older sister. Not differently than Medea's brother in Colchis, the first daughter of Corinth's royal couple was 'ritually' sacrificed in secret as a result of a plot devised to assure the king (Creon) the continuation of his dominance in a power-struggle with his own queen. This 'ritual' killing is the secret of civilized Corinth, a secret buried in a subterranean room of the royal palace, a secret that Medea is guilty to have discovered. Last, but not least, Wolf's Medea flees Colchis not really because of a blind passion for Jason. Leaving with Jason to Greece is primarily a way for Medea to escape from the corruption of her father's politics. It is evident that there is very little, if any, of Euripides' *Medea* in Wolf's character. Yet her essential trait is mainly a Euripidean one, though refigured in some way: Medea is an outsider to a very extreme degree, in that she is such both in her native land and in Corinth. Estrangement becomes her mark: there is no real place for her to feel at home. This Medea is partially an autobiographical one,

76 The English title is my translation from the original German title. It is closer to the original and reflects the essential formal trait characterizing this re-working more than the title under which Wolf's novel has been published in English, that is, *Medea: A New Retelling*. The discussion above is built on Schiavoni (1998); Hochgeschurz (1998); Rubino (2000) 84–123.

77 Whether the motif of infanticide is an innovation introduced by Euripides is still an object of debate: for an overview on the issue, see Mastronarde (2002) 52–3.

for she reflects the experience and feelings of the author after the end of the East German regime, with the fall of the Berlin wall. She embodies Wolf's dual disillusion with the East German regime that was, and with the new climate of a reunited Germany. Hence her estrangement occurs. In light of the historical context in which the novel was written, i.e., a few years after the unification of Germany, most have interpreted the contrast between Colchis and Corinth as a metaphor for the contrast between the 'two' Germanys, a polemical statement in the feud between 'Ossis' and 'Wessis',⁷⁸ with an implied partisan view that East Germany (Colchis)—i.e., the land of the author—was better than West Germany (Corinth). Indeed, in the context of the East-West polemics in the '90s, Wolf's 'rehabilitation' of Medea by expunging all Euripides' 'dark' traits might be seen as a plea for exculpation of both East Germans and the author herself. To Wolf's mind both, she herself and her land, are victim of a capitalistic Corinth, i.e., the united Germany. True to the words of Wolf herself,⁷⁹ this would be, however, a reductive reading. While researching for her novel, processing and giving her own interpretation to the material she had found, what has indeed shocked Wolf, and her character Medea, is the moral likeness between Colchis and Corinth. Both are corrupt worlds where men, after usurping power from women who were in charge in the early matriarchal system,⁸⁰ preserve that power for themselves through crimes, i.e., the sacrifice of the innocents. Wolf's implied critique is not that of an East German on the shortcomings of a united Germany. Hers is rather a cultural criticism involving the European / Western society and civilization as a whole, symbolized by the two different models of the 'two Germanies'. Her Medea is disappointed with both and cannot find a home in either one. She is the scapegoat that any corrupt community, which lies to itself and covers up its crimes (as Colchis and Corinth did in this retelling of the myth), needs. Wolf's Medea stands for victims of any totalitarian / one-party state whose corrupted rulers fabricate stories and rumors to discredit their opponents.⁸¹ But she also stands for the injustices that women suffered at the hands of the manipulative male power, which needs to keep women in an inferior, subordinate state of silence.⁸² "A woman is wild if she has a mind of her own", says Medea in her first monologue

78 Ossis and Wessis are colloquial, informal names for citizens of (respectively) the former East and West Germany.

79 See Schaivoni (1998) 42–3.

80 See Hochgeschurz (1998) 10–1.

81 There might be here a personal involvement, for it was revealed that she collaborated for a short time with the East German secret police, against the unification of Germany.

82 For a feminist reading of Wolf's novel, see Van Zyl Smit (2002) 115–7.

in Wolf's novel. This sentence combines notions of gender and otherness, which are among the main iconic features that Medea embodies.

As a potent icon of feminism⁸³ and of 'other-wild-barbarian-culturally different', Medea keeps haunting our imagination by being 'resurrected' in continuously increasing re-adaptations whose aim is usually to resonate with, and respond to, some major contemporary concerns, including war-related issues, terrorism, and religion-oriented fight and violence.

As for the war theme, the choice of this one of Euripides' tragedies might come as a surprise, considering the presence of war-related plays in the repertoire of the Greek playwright, such as—to mention to best known—*Trojan Women*.⁸⁴ Yet there is a very peculiar, though almost completely dismissed, re-adaptation of *Medea* that addresses war-related concerns pertaining to a conflict of recent history: the war in the so called ex-Yugoslavia (or, Former-Yugoslavia), or, more generally, in the Balkans, in the late '80s-early '90s. It is *Medea 1995* by the writer and director Leo Katunarić, first performed in May 1995 in Zagabria, at the end of the war, "in the first day of peace," as the play-program states.⁸⁵ In this re-writing Medea is a *guerrilla* back from the front together with other fighters, Jason and his men. Three main motifs link this *Medea* with the Euripidean play: love, jealousy, and revenge. But the revenge is not the act of a woman in despair over betrayal by her lover, nor does it involve an infanticide. This Medea does not have children. Hers is a political action, if not a terroristic one, and concentrates on her rival, whose name significantly is New Medea. The latter is the niece of Creon, president of the country for which Medea and Jason fought (i.e., out of metaphor, Croatia). She symbolizes the new life after war, a life that was not the one for which the fighters, like Medea, longed, i.e., the life of real peace. New Medea well embodies the corrupt world of political opportunism. She thus is a good match for Jason who, differently from Medea, easily adjusts to the environment newly created by the end of the war, without having any troubles in re-integrating himself into a society that rewards him for his military merits. On the contrary, his fellow

83 See Hall (1997) 42–77; Van Zyl Smit (2002).

84 See above, pp. 44–99.

85 Leo Katunarić wrote the play under the pseudonym Josip Vela, and then directed its stage-performance, adding to his own script: see Rubino (2000) 145 and n. 1. Like for some other cases discussed above, for the absence of specific performative features and the apparent priority given to the plot itself, with its political agenda, I preferred to include this play in this paragraph rather than in the one devoted specifically to stage productions (below, pp. 415–21). The analysis is based on the study of Rubino (2000) 145–52, and on my reading of the script available in Italian translation in Rubino (2000) 153–90.

fighters, including Medea, who have allowed Jason to reach his current position through their own help, are rejected because they are no longer needed, or useful. The inability of Medea's and Jason's companions to re-integrate is brilliantly rendered through their transformation into grotesque maidens in Jason's new house: the alienation brings about a loss of identity. Jason himself refuses to recognize them (Medea included), even though they killed for him. The social climbing of Jason by entering the entourage of Creon, whose speeches and behavior resonate with those of the corrupt and manipulative president of Croatia of the time, and the vain attempt of Medea to fit into the 'new' world are the basic threads of the plot of the first part of this play. A reversal occurs in the second part. Politically, rather than simply personally, betrayed by Jason, incapable of adaptation, Medea can only go back to her 'former', real self. She takes over again her role as a guerrilla. Her companions do the same: from their maiden-status they turn themselves again into fighters. They transform Jason's house into a bunker, and themselves into rebel-terrorists. They first kill the president, Creon, then capture and keep as prisoner New Medea, while Jason vainly tries a mediation. Eventually Medea and her companions commit suicide. Here we see terrorism as a weapon of rebellion, and death as a way of liberation from a world they have served in war. But this world is now ready to forget them, instead of helping them to be a part of the society which they worked to create. It is safe to say that *Medea 1995* is far more than a story of betrayed love and cruel revenge. It is rather a political denunciation of the reality of war and its aftermath in the ex-Yugoslavia. Through the figure of Medea in particular, and that of the ex-combat-maiden in general, the major issue surfacing throughout the play pertains to the veterans, to their difficulty in being, or feeling, accepted back, to their sense of isolation and, at times, real discrimination, to their being abandoned and betrayed precisely by the government for which they fought, to their being seen as 'different', as 'other', to their thoughts of suicide and their actual suicide.⁸⁶

With reference to war and terrorism, another recent, interesting case of reception is *Medea in Jerusalem*, by the British playwright Roger Kirby (2004),

86 According to Magno (2000), the percentage of ex-fighters from the Balkan war suffering from what is called "Vietnam Syndrome", best known, in the USA, as 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD), is still very high. By addressing the veterans' issue, *Medea 1995* resembles a specific re-reading of some ancient Greek tragedy in vogue in the USA since the time in which the psychiatrist Jonathan Shay (1994; 2002) has used the Classics to deal with Vietnam veterans. I am referring to the 'Theater of War: The Philoctetes Project' by Bryan Doerries (2008), and its extension through Peter Meineck's program 'Ancient Greeks/Modern Lives' (2012): see Lauriola (2013; 2014a; 2014b); also, Meineck/Konstan (2014).

where the conflict of the couple becomes a religious-rooted conflict between a Palestinian Medea and an Israeli Jason. Their children, still innocent victims, are suicide-bombers, which mirrors a typical Muslim modern sacrifice.⁸⁷

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

The most represented feature in the visual arts is certainly the one that keeps making Medea a 'problematically complex figure': the infanticide. In the ancient iconographic tradition, it is indeed possible to identify, chronologically and geographically, a shift of focus from Medea the 'witch' to Medea, the 'foreigner murderer' of her children.⁸⁸ In Attic vase-paintings before the production of Euripides' *Medea*, the artists portrayed the heroine's magical deeds in Colchis and Iolcus, or an episode that belongs to Medea's sojourn in Athens, i.e., her threat to Theseus. No Attic vase relates to the 'core' of Medea's tragic story, and the center of Euripides' play, i.e., the Corinthian episode. After the performance of Euripides' *Medea*, from about 400 BC onward, new subjects appear in vases produced in southern Italy: the killing of the children, Medea's escape on the Sun's chariot, and Medea in oriental costume. Besides revealing some influence from Euripides, the way in which these new iconographic subjects are articulated in some of the extant vases is symptomatic of the specific reception of important details of the tragedy's ending by southern Italian audiences, in contrast to Athenian audiences.⁸⁹ The 'Cleveland Krater' (ca. 400 BC) is the most suitable example of this kind.⁹⁰ Here Medea, wearing oriental dress and tiara, is aloft and driving a chariot, which is enclosed in a big sun—a clear reference to the helpful, though indirect, intervention of the god Sun in the final of Euripides' play. Winged Erinyes flank the chariot, looking down on the human figures below: on the left there is an helpless Jason; on the right the bodies of the two killed children are draped across an altar with the tutor and nurse standing before them and mourning over them. Medea aloft in a chariot encircled by the rays of the sun and her oriental dress may reflect the peculiar reception of her otherness and 'estranged nature'. The

87 See Foley (2012) 217.

88 For a detailed discussion see Séchan (1926); more recently Sourvinou-Inwood (1997). For a concise overview, see also Mastronarde (2002) 66–9.

89 Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 271–81.

90 It is a Lucanian *calyx-krater* (wine bowl), now in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Cleveland, Ohio, USA, Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund, 91.1).

corpses lying on an altar may reflect, and emphasize, Medea's wickedness, as if she killed her sons at the altar of the gods in contrast to what was a proper killing at the altar, i.e., sacrifice. Her act therefore would have been perceived as a perversion of sacrifice.⁹¹ This would call down the gods' punishment, and the presence of the Erinyes would fit the perception that Medea ought to be punished, thus giving visual expression to Jason's wish (Euripides, *Medea* 1389–90). This representation would make little sense for the Athenian audience, which was too familiar with the subsequent story of Medea; but it does express the southern Italian audiences' reception of the ending of the tragedy as too disturbing and needing some 'sanitizing' touch. Besides the presence of the Erinyes, the oriental costume may also work to this end, giving visual expression to the claim of Euripides' Jason that 'no Greek' woman would have done what Medea did.⁹² Stressing her non-Greek origin meant to distance her from female 'normality', making 'more acceptable' the ending of Euripides' tragedy.

From Euripides on, Medea slaying her children, or being about to, as well as Medea with the dead children, with or without a hint of her being a witch and of her 'barbarian' origin, are repeated motifs in the figurative arts.⁹³ The ending of the play has decreed, in a way, the 'popularity' of this motif. However, that same ending voices the anguish and inner conflict of Medea before the deed as well. Divided between a desire for revenge and maternal love, more than once Medea changes her mind. Eventually she thinks of the killing as a necessity.⁹⁴ Anguish, hesitation, and despair, which betray her maternal love, are to be found in some figurative representations, too. In a lost painting of Medea by Timomachus of Byzantium (3rd to 1st century BC?),⁹⁵ which is known through a wall painting from Pompeii, the heroine is represented a few

91 McDermott (1989) 75–8.

92 On the possibility that in Euripides' production Medea had worn Greek dress until the final scene, when she appeared in oriental dress, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 290–2.

93 To prove this it would be enough only to read the title of paintings and sculptures that have been devoted to Medea from Renaissance on: see the list in Reid (1993) II: 643–50; also in Torrence (2010) 133 n. 6. There are, however, some paintings that relate more directly to the heroine as 'witch' and 'barbarian'. One of the most representative of this type is certainly *Medea* by Frederick Sandys (1868), who painted the heroine as a sorceress in a portrait format, inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* rather than by Euripides: for a detailed analysis, see Prettejohn (2010).

94 Regarding this, see above, pp. 397, 399; also below, pp. 417–8.

95 There is no agreement about the period of this painter. According to the 1st-century AD Roman writer and naturalist Pliny The Elder (*Naturalis Historia* 35. 136) Timomachus is a contemporary of Caesar, and by commission from the same Caesar he made a copy of the painting under discussion, whose original is from the 3rd century. On the contrary, some

moments before the murder, “when the mother’s love was still struggling with her vengefulness”.⁹⁶ The wall painting from Pompeii is not accidentally called *Medea Contemplating the Murder of Her Children*: here Medea is standing in a thoughtful pose, with hands tensely intertwined, looking at the children with an expression that quite clearly reveals her anguish, her inner struggle and frustration as she thinks that she does not have, however, any choice. One of the modern pictorial receptions of this type, showing Medea before the horrible act, is the *Médée Furieuse* (“Furious Medea”) by the well-known French artist Eugene Delacroix (1838).⁹⁷ This painting, also known as *Medea Pursued and About to Kill Her Children*, brilliantly renders simultaneously Medea’s frenzied psychological state that will drive her eventually to kill her children, and all the anguish, terror, anger, and love that indeed characterize Medea in the final scene of Euripides’ play. Medea is portrayed in the mouth of a cave where she had fled while pursued by her enemy (likely the people of Corinth, or the men of Jason). She holds her terrorized sons tightly while looking at the entrance of the cave to be sure they are safe so far. But she also holds a knife, which foreshadows the horrific outcome of her frenzy and despair. Shadow is used to cover part of Medea’s face, thus symbolizing her tenebrous thoughts and her irrational state. Her being bare-breasted is a clear emblem of her motherhood and maternal care, which contrasts to the holding of the knife. This contrast depicts her torment and struggle, for she is about to kill the ones she lovingly nurtured. And to intensify the pathos of their situation, mother and sons are so interlocked that they form one single block. The children are part of the mother’s body, seeming to extend from their mother’s lap, a clear reminder of the womb from which they were born. The complex elaboration of Delacroix, and of other artists more sympathetic toward Medea,⁹⁸ reflects the complexity of Euripides’ Medea, challenging her crystallization into a murderer-mother,

scholars believe that Timomachus is actually the artist of the assumed third-century original: see Mastronarde (2002) 69 n. 118; Johnson (2011) 174.

96 Lessing (1962) 21.

97 Delacroix was interested in the subject of Medea for almost his entire career. He produced a second version of the early painting cited above, in 1859, which was destroyed during the Second World War, although it is known through a photograph. Later in 1862, on commission, he replicated his 1838 painting with slight variations. On Delacroix’ Medea, see Johnson (2011) 172–87.

98 Its not possible to give here a full description of the most noteworthy works that account for the reception of Euripides’ tragedy in the figurative arts (but, see above, n. 93). It is, however, worth mentioning the painting *Abschied der Medea* (“Medea’s Farewell”) by Anselm Feuerbach (1870), where Medea appears as a lovely, caring maternal figure, far more than in Delacroix: see Caiazza (1989) 82–3, n. 2.

yet leaving us, as Euripides did, with the question that arises whenever a mother kills her children: how can this happen?

This question, the ‘mystery of infanticide’, alongside the tormented figure of Medea in the ending of Euripides’ play, seems to lie at the heart of the wonderful 20th-century painting, *Medea*, by the American realist painter Bernard Safran (1964: Figure 1). Here there is no knife, no flight, no poisons, no mourning nurse. This Medea seems to be an ordinary, middle-class housewife, finely dressed and comfortable enough to afford the pearls she wears. She embraces her two boys with one arm around each of them, signaling protection but also ‘possession’: they belong to her. They are interlocked in a triangular shape forming one block, which emphasizes the bond. A sense of threat pervades the painting, and the two boys, faces upturned, seems to feel that something bad is about to happen. One looks at the mother and the other looks at his brother as if he is wondering what is happening. But it is Medea who gives this painting a remarkable, distinguishing touch, compared to all the other renditions. She stares at the viewer with a fixed gaze. Her eyes—as I see them—express a mix of resignation, deep sadness, and helplessness. To my mind it is as if she is asking us, the viewers, what she should do or what we would do in her situation. At the same time, her resigned, helpless look seems to tell us that she has no choice and, perhaps more strikingly, she seems to ask for compassion.

Music

“Music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world.”⁹⁹

With their grand gestures, the heroes and heroines of classical antiquity have proved to be suitable for adaptation in opera since its birth.¹⁰⁰ Preference has been given to tragic stories, and Medea’s tragedy is among the most re-used in opera.¹⁰¹ More or less sixty-four operas related to Medea have been located,

99 Attali (1985) 15.

100 On the other end, ancient drama was rooted in dance and music (see West 1992). Indeed, the invention of modern opera is ascribed to a group of humanists living in Florence, the ‘Camerata’ (end of the 16th century), who intended to reproduce the mix of poetry and music which they thought had been the form of ancient Greek tragedy: Reynolds (2000) 121.

101 See Reynolds (2000) 119; McDonald (2001) 180. The list of selected operas about, or including, Medea that McDonald provides in appendix to her essay on Theodorakis’ *Medea* is, not accidentally, the longest one compared to other tragic figures: McDonald (2001) 191–4. The numeric data I referred to above are from McDonald (2001) 180. For a concise list of operatic adaptations of Medea’s story, see also Reynolds (2000), 123, 143 n. 8. More specifically, on Medea as the most popular operatic Greek heroine in the last thirty-five years, see Brown (2004) 291–4.



FIGURE 1 *Bernard Safran, Medea (1964), oil on masonite, 86.4 × 104.1 cm, © Estate of Bernard Safran (Courtesy of Elizabeth Maylon, Manager of Collection at Estate of Bernard Safran).*

the majority of which have been produced either in the 18th or 20th century (respectively, twenty-six and seventeen operas) when women's rights have been taken more seriously. The operas from these two centuries are more faithful to the original Greek text with its powerful heroine who achieves her revenge and escapes with impunity. In the other centuries in which operas on Medea have been located, that is, in the 17th century, when opera actually began as a revival of ancient Greek drama, and in the 19th century, when women's rights were not taken as a real and important issue, the heroine appears weaker and more submissive. This Medea is incapable of committing any crime, and if she does commit crimes, she is punished. Although there are exceptions, Medea in opera seems to be a catalyst for gender-biased politics.

The very first opera related to Medea is *Giasone* ("Jason") by the Italian composer Francesco Cavalli, a pupil of Claudio Monteverdi (1648). Based on the

poem of Apollonius Rhodius, it became the most popular opera of the 17th century. Depicting a benevolent Medea, this opera is more a comedy, resembling both the Greek New Comedy and the Greek novel. It fits well the taste of the century, which grants a certain preference for the 'happy ending'. By the end of this century (1693) the Baroque French composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier composes *Médée* for a libretto by Thomas Corneille, which is in turn an adaptation of his brother, Pierre Corneille's work.

Inspired by this work is also the libretto written by François-Benoît Hoffmann for the Italian composer Luigi Cherubini's opera *Médée* (1797).¹⁰² *Furor* ("fury/wrath") is what dominates text and music. The heroine's *furor* seems to have captured the composer himself. Cherubini proves to be a master in expressing musically the different nuances and shades of Medea's *furor* by comprising in a *climax* the anguish of Medea-lovely mother and the ferocious perversion to which, at a certain point, *furor* drives Medea-lover.

In the early 19th century, the well-known Italian composer Vincenzo Bellini produced *Norma* (1831) in which traces from Medea's story can be found, although she is never mentioned.¹⁰³ Several main features can but evoke Medea: the 'otherness' or 'foreignness' of Norma, who belongs to a people (the Druids) that were 'barbarian' for the Romans, i.e., for the people of her lover, the centurion Pollione; her status as a priestess, which recalls both the ritual/magic practices and the divine connections of Medea; her status as abandoned and betrayed woman, for Pollione leaves Norma wishing to marry the younger Adalgisa; her *furor* and desire for revenge, which targets the children that she had from Pollione. But, in contrast to Medea, Norma confines herself to thinking only of murdering her children out of revenge. Although she even raises the knife over them, her maternal tenderness and love prevail. The 'mother' redeems, in a way, the 'woman-lover'. *Norma* is a reworking of Medea's story specifically peculiar to the 19th century: everything is sweetened; the only crime she commits is the one of romantic passion for which she has betrayed her people. Aware of 'this' crime, Norma condemns herself to death.

102 A quite detailed analysis of this opera is in Reynolds (2000) 127–32. See also Belloni (1998) 68–73.

103 About the connection of Bellini's *Norma* and Euripides' *Medea*, see Paduano (1982) 152–77; Belloni (1998) 74–5; Reynolds (2000) 137–8. The link is indirectly provided through the French dramatist Louis-Antoine-Alexandre Soumet's *Norma ou l'infanticide* ("Norma, or the Infanticide," 1831), on which Bellini's opera is freely based. Soumet's play is in turn inspired by Medea's myth, with the important variation of having the heroine commit suicide.

The 20th-century musical re-adaptations of Euripides' *Medea* appear in form both of traditional operas and of modern musicals. Among the seventeen operas produced in this century that feature Medea as a woman successfully fighting back are the '*Medeas*' by the English composer Gavin Bryars (1984),¹⁰⁴ and the Greek Mikis Theodorakis (1991).¹⁰⁵ The first is born out of an invitation to Bryars from the director Robert Wilson to write the music for his production of an adaptation of Euripides' play. The proportion of speech and music shifted to the point that the work became an opera. Wishing to reproduce a music as close to the ancient Greek one as possible, as a result of his research in the field, Bryars ends up using, in his opera, a large body of tuned percussions and few brass instruments. As to the text, it is basically a translation of Euripides' play into modern Greek with some portions in French, due to the fact that it was first performed in Lyons, while other parts are either in Greek or in English. The use of different languages fits a specific intention of the author: to emphasize the distance and differences between the characters. Mikis Theodorakis' *Medea* is, as well, a direct translation of the original into modern Greek and is faithful to Euripides in depicting musically the metamorphosis of Medea's passion, sufferings, and final revenge. His opera's central theme is, in the end, the theme of universal suffering, which includes 'even' Jason. The composer seems to be quite sympathetic toward Jason. Special attention is given to the selection of the voices: Medea is a 'soprano dramatico', typically characterized by a powerful, emotive voice, which emphasizes her femininity and motherliness; the nurse is a 'mezzo', probably to recall her being an experienced female; Jason is a tenor, which would suggest Jason's love for Medea, for tenors mostly have the romantic leads in opera; finally the king Creon and Aegeus are basses, which adds to their authority. Among musical themes, beside the 'foreign' one that obviously evokes the 'barbarian' origin of Medea, is the 'march-like' theme which significantly accompanies the nurse's comment that Medea will not rest until someone is hurt, either a friend or an enemy (cf. Euripides, *Medea* 94–5). The martial theme is faithful to Euripides' representation of the woman as a warrior, namely as a Homeric warrior, preoccupied with honor and avoiding shame and the derision of his or her enemies (cf. Euripides, *Medea* 383, 404, 807–10).¹⁰⁶ Last but not least, the martial music associated with Medea emphasizes the well-known claim that she would prefer to fight in the front of the battle three times rather than bear a child once (cf. Euripides, *Medea* 251). Music emphasizes and also enhances the climactic moment of Medea's decision to kill

104 See Brown (2004) 292.

105 See McDonald (2001) 184–90.

106 On Euripides' portrayal of Medea in the tradition of the heroic male warrior, namely with close resemblance to Homer's Achilles, see Blondell (1999) 163–4.

her children: the rhythm, a waltz-like one, is intentionally at odds with the tragic text; it indeed expresses in music the ambiguous and conflicted state of a woman who triumphs and yet grieves. The initial music, accompanying Medea's lamentation, returns at the end to accompany Jason's lamentation, enclosing the whole story in a ring composition and showing the reversal of roles between Medea and Jason. While Medea now takes over the dominant role that Jason held at the beginning, Jason takes over Medea's initial role of lamentation.

Among the operas, a *sui generis* case is the unfinished *Medea: A Sex-War Opera*, by the English poet and playwright Tony Harrison. In late 1980s the New York Metropolitan Opera commissioned a work on Medea to the American composer Jacob Druckman, with a libretto by Harrison. Druckman died in 1996, with only the overture and one scene having been completed. Harrison, however, decided to publish his complete libretto. As the title suggests, Harrison uses Medea's tragedy to universalize her conflict with Jason as the eternal gendered conflict between women and men. This 'opera' can be seen as a "powerful indictment of traditional male representations of the female".¹⁰⁷ Harrison indeed shows that men, too, have their part of the blame. He in fact contrasts Medea with Heracles, a father who killed his children, and, yet, his reputation was one of a hero, contrary to what happened to Medea, a woman. Intending to underline the different treatment unfairly allotted to male and female filicide, in ancient myth as well as in modern media, Harrison's play ends with a shift in the media's focus from 'Medea syndrome' to male filicide: headlines from fake newspapers reporting cases of mothers killing their children are projected on a screen, but the last projection quoted a headline from real newspaper which referred to a father who cut his four children's throat.¹⁰⁸

As mentioned above, the 20th century in particular is characterized by the adaptation of Euripides' tragedy in modern musical form, too. Worth mentioning are *Medea. The musical* (1996) by the American playwright John Fisher, and *Marie Christine* (1999) by the American composer and librettist Michael John LaChiusa.¹⁰⁹ Fisher's musical is characterized by a high degree of metatheatricity: it is indeed a play within a play that begins as an attempt to restage the story of Medea and Jason with a gay-Jason (Paul), who unexpectedly falls in love with straight-Medea (Elsa). Their relationship is where life and art mix as they begin to challenge gender stereotypes with the intervention of the director, John (i.e., Fisher himself), who addresses and discusses with

107 McDonald (1992) 115–25 (the quotation is at p. 115).

108 See Riley (1992) 113–4.

109 See Foley (2004) 108–10, and (2012) 211–5; Brown (2004) 293.

the characters their prejudices, such as that of the mother's infanticide as a feminist act, as the "ultimate act of self-empowerment". In her metatheatrical interaction with the director, the Medea of this musical objects to this. A mother killing her children is a woman who hurts herself to hurt the man that has abandoned her, and this is "a man's idea of a feminist act".¹¹⁰ Probably conceived as a gay-empowerment work, this musical version of Medea's story has a hilarious end, with an unexpected appearance of Phaedra and Hippolytus. The gay-Jason pursues Hippolytus, while the previously straight-Medea proclaims a passion for Phaedra. Ultimately Jason and Medea perform an absurd sacrifice of the 'babies' (two adult males). Everything ends with mutual apologies. Along with humor and parodies, apparently the musical has a political agenda. LaChiusa's *Marie Christine* is, on the contrary, a more straightforward musical adaptation of the original story. Medea is a Creole woman from New Orleans in the 1890s. She is a kind of witch: she has been trained in voodooism by her mother. She leaves her native land to follow a white sea captain who will subsequently abandon her to further his political ambitions with a more 'profitable' marriage. He becomes engaged to the daughter of a political boss in Chicago, where the couple has previously 'landed'. This new Medea, too, will kill the rival and her own children.

Dance

Classical themes have inspired ballet and dance as well. Medea's story has been re-worked in dance since late 18th century. The father of modern ballet, Jean-George Noverre (1727–1810), created what is perhaps the first ballet inspired by Medea, namely the ballet *Médée et Jason* ("Medea and Jason") first performed in 1762. It constitutes a milestone in the history of dance, and it was very popular, as the numerous revivals across Europe in the last decades of the 18th century demonstrate.¹¹¹ But it is above all starting from the 20th century that Medea has been re-worked through this artistic medium. Among the very dynamic and imaginative dance-works on Greek themes worth noting are those by Martha Graham (1894–1991), a well-known American choreographer and innovator in modern dance.¹¹² *Cave of Heart* (1947) is the Graham's choreography devoted to Medea's story. The ballet music is by the

110 For both quotations mentioned above, see Foley (2004) 109.

111 See Macintosh (2000) 4. Caiazza (1989) 30 n. 51, mentions two ballets related to Medea's myth, both produced in Italy in a time close to Jean George Noverre: *Giasone* ("Jason") by Horbau-Ricciardi (1784), and *Argonauti in Colchos* ("The Argonauts in Colchis") by Gazzaniga (1789).

112 See *Dance Magazine* (July 1991, an issue completely devoted to Martha Graham). Also Macintosh (2000) 4; Foley (2012) 93–4.

well-known American composer Samuel Barber; the original title was *Serpent Heart* (1946). Graham's intentions were not to make a literal use of the myth; her dance was rather meant to project, through the figure of Medea and Jason, psychological states of jealousy and vengeance. Barber later reworked this music for a concert suite entitled *Medea*.

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

It has been argued that Medea is the most theatrical of all Greek tragic characters, and that the propensity to bring this play of Euripides to the modern stage rests on its theatricality, together with the strong character of Medea herself.¹¹³ Significantly when Greek tragedy debuted on the U.S. stage in the 19th century,¹¹⁴ it met with some resistance and indifference, except for new versions of Euripides' *Medea*.¹¹⁵ Above all in the last two centuries, everywhere across the world, this play has remained the most performed Greek tragedy: from continental Europe, the British Isles, and North America to South Africa, South America and Japan.¹¹⁶ Many of the productions are 'rehearsals' either of the original play, more or less faithfully translated from Greek, or of literary re-workings / adaptations by writers and poets of subsequent centuries (from Seneca to Corneille, from Anouilh to Müller, to mention a few). Starting approximately from the mid-20th century, however, many productions tend to present features which are more independent from the literary source, whatever it is, and are strictly connected to the performance nature of the work itself. These features may often convey a 'dramatic' response to local, socio-political contexts, and may range from the recitative format to local living theatrical traditions, customs, music, and setting.

The large number of productions of Euripides' *Medea* on the modern stage obviously dictates a selection. Attention to peculiar performance-features and to a wide geographic distribution has determined the selection of the

¹¹³ See Hartigan (1995) 48; Macintosh (2000) 1, 5.

¹¹⁴ In Europe, productions and stage re-adaptations began to take place far earlier, i.e., in the 16th century. Gowen's database (2000) 232–74 is a good source for tracking the stage performances of Greek tragedy, in particular of *Medea*, thus providing a fair idea both of its frequency on European stage and of the general extent of this 'practice'. Very useful also is the database of the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) an Oxford University (UK) research project: see above, p. 95.

¹¹⁵ Foley (2012) 1, 190.

¹¹⁶ For related database and lists, see below, p. 435 (# Other Resources).

following 20th- and 21st century stage productions of this Euripidean play: *Medea* by Franca Rame (Italy, 1977); *Medea* by Yukio Ninagawa (Japan, 1978); and *MedEia* by Brett Bailey and Lara Bye (South Africa, 2005).

E io zitta me dovrebbe stare per lo bene de li figlioli . . . che ricatto infame ("And I, I should keep silent for the good of my children. That's a blackmail. What a despicable blackmail . . .": *Medea*, p. 70).¹¹⁷

The play, actually a monologue, *Medea* by the Italian playwright and actress Franca Rame is among the few Italian productions of this tragedy that enjoy an international reputation, and certainly one of the even fewer adaptations that have been translated into other languages and are available on commercial videotape.¹¹⁸ The writing and staging of this play marks a turning point in Rame's activity. Having so far covered only supporting roles in her husband's (Dario Fo) works,¹¹⁹ she decided to subvert, like a real *Medea*, the gender expectations, seeking and achieving the right to deliver 'the punch line'. It was the time of the first Italian feminist movement in the 1970s, a period of intense struggle for Italian women. Rame's *Medea*, while conveying the issue of the time, remains an iconic subversive message against patriarchal culture. Her *Medea* is a monologue that strategically comes at the end of a set of monologues, entitled *Tutto casa, letto e chiesa* ("All Home, Bed and Church"), written and performed in the vernacular of contemporary Rome, with Rame as the sole actress. Both the position at the end of a performance that had seen Rame play the role of several women suffering from some form of exploitation by men, and its being the only tragic section of a performance of comic monologues, give Rame's *Medea* a distinguished status. A peculiar feature of this stage production is the use of a prologue where the actress addresses the audience directly, anticipating and explaining the themes presented in the theatrical piece that follows. Rame here mentions Euripides as her source, and summarizes the plot of the original, singling out the crucial aspect of the story on which her theatrical monologue is based: the betrayal by Jason and subsequent abandonment, which is presented as a common contemporary action. Rame then goes to point out the reaction of the mythic figure as far different from that of contemporary women: far from responding with depression, she plans a revenge

117 Page numbers and quotations are from Rame (1989); the translation is mine; but see also below, n. 118.

118 There are indeed several English translations, such as Hood (1981); Hanna (1991), and a video-recorded performance of Rame's *Medea* within the show (mentioned above) put on stage in Rome, in 1977. On Rame's *Medea*, see, also, Cavallaro (2010).

119 Recipient of the 1997 Nobel Prize in Literature.

by killing the children she bore to Jason. The actress concludes her prologue by warning the audience to take that action metaphorically: it is a gesture of rebellion against the patriarchal exploitation of women who are expected to keep quiet and, within the “cage and yoke” of marriage, to think of themselves as mothers rather than as women. Motherhood is seen as a disguised, culturally constructed male trap that aims at controlling women and limiting their possibility to develop an autonomous female identity: “What a despicable (moral) blackmail!” Rame-Medea will cry at a certain point of the monologue. As in the prologue, so throughout the performance of the monologue itself, Rame is the only person on stage, covering different roles. She is the women of Corinth, whom she accuses of empowering the patriarchal system: they in fact do not question, but just accept the men’s law and support the men’s use of motherhood as a means of oppressing women. She also is Medea herself, who creates a plan for taking revenge, who meets with Jason (whose presence is only implied by her addressing to him, as if he were there), and who eventually kills her children. The splitting of her voice between the two roles might be seen—I think—as a dramatic device to represent the two sides of Medea: she is, at least at first, a victim herself of the patriarchal culture, but also a woman able to rebel. Her refusal of the ‘yoke of motherhood’ marks the transition from victim status to rebel. Together with the subsequent infanticide, this transition signals the birth of a new woman. The last words of this Medea are remarkably ambiguous for the audience. Addressing herself, Medea’s last words are: “Die! Die! To let a new woman be born . . . , a new woman”. Is she talking to herself, or to one of her children? In the several translations, these lines are accompanied by a stage direction according to which the protagonist would shout these final words, as if to celebrate a triumph.¹²⁰ But the way in which Rame recited those words is quite different, and it is essential to grasp the intentional ambiguity which adds to the complexity of this figure. The actress did not shout those words on stage: they are not triumphant, but rather they voice the agony and anguish of a woman who is killing part of herself to give birth to a woman who will not bear the yoke of male ‘laws’. In this light a peculiarly striking feature of this stage-production is, indeed, the absence of any male voice: no voice of Jason, or Creon or any other male interrupts or silences Medea. That of Medea is the lone voice that the audience hears. By way of conclusion about Rame’s *Medea*, I would be tempted to say that in her reception Rame refigures the ‘necessity’ of the infanticide: it becomes unavoidable in order to

120 See also Cavallaro (2010) 198.

free and redefine women's identity against patriarchal motherhood: the male's blackmail.¹²¹

Undoubtedly peculiar is the stage-production of *Medea* by the Japanese director Yukio Ninagawa, whose premiere occurred in 1978 in Tokyo. Since then it toured worldwide in several versions (although mostly presented in Japanese), meeting success over and over in a total of more than two hundred performances.¹²² Aimed at creating a 'universal theatre' by merging Eastern and Western traditions, Ninagawa's *Medea* offers an example of how an attentive choice of theatrical techniques and features, although 'strange' to the so-called Western canon, may contribute to illuminating and rendering vividly on stage what belongs to the world of emotions and inner processes that are basically expressed through words in a literary text. This might have been the key for his worldwide success, beyond Japanese audiences, which were, however, his first goal. Ninagawa's choice of *Medea*, in fact, was due to his intention to show to Japanese women that women too have voice, strength, and the capacity of acting. Ninagawa intended to create a sympathetic Medea,

121 A few years after Rame's *Medea*, in 1981, Marica Boggio, playwright, theatre director, and co-founder of the first Italian all-women theatre "La Maddalena" (1973), re-adapted and put on stage a new *Medea* which transcends the refusal of motherhood as being considered a form of patriarchal oppression, thus re-appropriating motherhood as a form of maturing and, above all, of self-definition: see Cavallaro (2010) 199–202. More recently, and again on the Italian stage, in particular the issue of motherhood has recurred to become the main focus of 'modern' stories of infanticide which explicitly evoke, in the title itself, the archetype, we may say, of the infanticide. I am referring to *From Medea* by the Italian singer and writer Grazia Verasani, premiered at the Teatro Colosseo in Rome, in 2002. Consisting of about thirty short acts, it tells the story of four women who, convicted of murdering their own children, are serving a term of imprisonment. These women are presented as *colpevoli innocenti* ("innocent guilty"). This striking oxymoron, in my opinion, well renders the complexity behind the action of Medea and of women to whom social expectations have always been asking to nullify, in a way, their person and their dignity for the sake of motherhood, which, once again, appears to be a weapon of the 'male/patriarchal-oriented' culture that confines femininity to being mothers. The four women are like Rame's Medea and the ancient Medea, i.e., *victims* of a system that exasperates them to the point that, to rebel and free themselves, they become *guilty* of monstrous actions. *From Medea* mirrors the often overlooked complexity of murderer-mothers by delving into the social and cultural environment of contemporary mothers through the stories of those four women, posing challenging questions about motherhood, social pressure, 'hidden guilty' of such tragic event, and so forth: see Bernocco (2013). Verasani's piece has recently inspired the movie *Maternity Blues*, by the Italian director Fabrizio Cattani, released in 2012: see Uffreduzzi (2012).

122 See Foley (1999–2000); Smethurst (2000; 2002). My analysis is built on these studies.

and to represent her as being both a victim of her gender's constraints and, yet, a strongly determined woman in her last resolve. To fulfill this purpose, Ninagawa combined conventions of the traditional theatre of Japan, *Kabuki*, and the puppet theatre, *Bunraku*. With an all-male cast being used, the lead actor playing Medea, trained as *Kabuki-onnaga* (that is, a male actor trained in playing female roles), could effectively 'make visible' on stage both the self of Medea tragically divided between an anguished mother and a strongly vengeful woman, and the transition from one status to another. Indeed, at the beginning of the performance, this Medea uses body movements and voice intonations that are traditionally linked to the female gender on stage against those linked with the male one. As soon as this Medea becomes committed to revenge and to the killing of her children, using an actual *Kabuki* convention, called *hikinuki*, which consists of removing one's own costume in the course of the play, the actor takes away what on stage represents a female motherly Medea, i.e., the heavy female costume, with its prominent breast. By so doing the actor reveals a masculine body and thus takes on what was reserved for a male role: revenge, murder . . . action. Hence, this 'new' Medea starts acting as Japanese male hero. Ninagawa's attentive adaptations of the potentials of *Kabuki's* conventions to a 'western' play allows him to make visual on stage the split of personality that the heroine experiences, and the shift from one to the other 'self-half', in a way that would be impossible for western theatre conventions. Interestingly, in the exploitation and adaptation of these potentialities, a gendered discourse emerges, which mirrors the ancient as well as contemporary Japanese perception of women. Indeed, when it comes to persuade Aegeus to offer her asylum, Ninagawa's Medea shifts toward the feminine and geisha *onnagata* style,¹²³ seducing Aegeus in words and intonation. And when Medea struggles with herself before taking the definite decision about her children, references to motherly images are delivered in *onnagata* style, while the self-exhortation not to be weak and to carry out the deed is delivered with the intonation of a man. The gendered bias is evident: 'female' seduction vs. 'male' resolute action. Differently from the original and most adaptations, the murder of the children is represented on the stage in perfect accord with the perception of honor in Japanese culture. Japanese sense of honor may translate, for *Kabuki* characters, into the demand to sacrifice one's own family members, if it is necessary to maintain one's own credibility and honorable status. Yet to lighten the intense emotional burden of the murder and avoid any consternation, Ninagawa draws from the *Bankaru* ("puppet theatre") the idea of

123 That is, as noted above, the male actor performs as a woman, reproducing female gestures and tone of voice.

making the children appear doll-like, thus representing their corpses through dolls. Brilliantly, still exploiting the *Kabuki* potentialities, Ninagawa maintains and re-adapts Euripides' ending. Bringing out on stage a Medea who wears dresses and make-up appropriate in *Kabuki* to supernatural being, the director makes her look down from on high in a cart, using a technique familiar to Japanese theatre audiences, i.e., the *chunori* ('the riding through the air'). Medea has thus become a *hitokami* ("a god person"), like one of the 'super-heroes' of Japanese legends, an apparent re-adaptation of the 'godlike' final appearance of Medea in the original Euripidean play.¹²⁴

Brilliantly innovative in terms of stage production, yet capable of conveying all the traditional 'concerns' that the original Greek play addresses, is the South Africa production *MedEia*, designed and co-directed by Brett Bailey and Lara Bye in 2005 in Cape Town.¹²⁵ Set in a post-colonial African wasteland, the play is not performed on a stage, nor does it occur in a single place. It is the audience that moves around from one scene to another as the story progresses. This inaugurated a new way to watch a play. As the audience, limited to fifty per performance, walked across about twenty changes of scene, it was plunged into the realities of existence in a township by witnessing and participating in the daily life of the characters of the play. Re-interpreted as a play about love and the many truths and lies that relate to it, the entire life and career of Medea, from Colchis to Corinth, constitutes the core plot of this work. The audience could 'physically' follow the different phases of Medea's life, but not simply by walking from one setting to another. Indeed there was not a linear progression of the action from its beginning to its end. On the contrary, there was an achronological presentation of the story. This is subsequent to another innovative dramatic device pertaining to the character of Medea: she was continuously represented by two actors, one in gold cloth for the young Medea, naïve, in love, completely lost for Jason, and happy; the other, with a grey-white face, for the old Medea, in sorrow and suffering. When the focus was on the young Medea, the old Medea was at the side to remind us that she would become a mature woman consumed by her experience of love and betrayal. When the old Medea was the focus, the young Medea was at the side, as a constant reminder of her former status. The two most important times of Medea's life are thus constantly present, with the old Medea often working to foreshadow the events to come. Happiness in the present would turn to anguish later. By representing the events pertaining to the relationship between Medea and Jason in

124 For other interesting Japanese productions of *Medea*, specifically on the American stage, see Foley (2012) 221.

125 A very accurate analysis of this play and its stage performance is in von Zyl Smit (2007a).

an achronological sequence, the director meant to emphasize the harsh contrast between the time of love and the time of betrayal, hatred and revenge, a contrast that prepares the way for the struggling, agonizing, and divided soul of Medea. Her story here serves to show the harsh truth behind the illusion of life and love. But Bailey's innovative production spread the theme of the play far beyond love. Indeed it also encompassed both the forgotten condition of the poor and exploited in the modern world, and the xenophobia that still strongly informs western 'civilized' countries. As to the plight of the poor and exploited, the king Pelias-scene is significantly revealing. Resembling in costume an African dictator, Pelias is represented as lounging on top of a washing machine in a room full of the 'first world's goodies': home appliances and luxuries like a TV. They symbolized the corrupted power of leaders seeking material possessions and wealth rather than the wellness of their country. The vanity and actual worthlessness of those 'goodies', which are set in a location without electricity, thus make Pelias a vehicle to denounce 'Third World' leaders who drive their countries to bankruptcy for their self-interest, regardless of the condition of their people. No less evident and significant is the related denunciation of the responsibility of the 'First World' in this exploitation of the poor. In contrast with the primitive settlement, many Coca Cola signs appear. The xenophobia/discrimination theme, which is in line with a trend identifiable in the original Euripidean play, is well represented in the Corinth-scene. Here Medea evidently appears as an outsider, an unwelcome stranger, living in complete isolation. This alienation was vividly portrayed by a scene in which Medea appeared surrounded not by human being, but by puppets.

Screen

Since almost the beginning, i.e., from the 'silent era' (early 20th century), Greek tragedy has represented an appealing repertoire to exploit for the 'big screen'; and in the beginning, there was no attempt to re-work the original either to adapt adequately it to the new 'medium' or to add to it. The first few 'movies' mostly consisted only of recording what was being performed on the stage in a documentary style. There was not yet any awareness of the cinema as 'art' *per se*.¹²⁶ Between the '50s and the '60s, the revival of the *kolossal* in the U.S. and the appearance of the 'muscle man'-film in Italy translate into the production of movies centering on the undertakings of Greco-Roman heroes. It is in this context that Medea debuts but only indirectly, overshadowed by the hero Jason. In *I giganti della Tessaglia* ("The Giants from Thessaly") by the

126 MacKinnon (1986) 4–20; Rubino (2000) 15 and n. 1; Michelakis (2004) 202–4; Michelakis/Wyke (2013) 1–19.

Italian director Riccardo Freda (1960), Medea barely appears, a witch in character but nothing else, with Jason's quest being the focus.¹²⁷ In *Jason and the Argonauts* by the American director Don Chaffey (1963), despite the entertaining mechanical special effects on which the whole movie is grounded, some space is given to the 'love story' of Jason and Medea, completely devoid, however, of its tragic depth.¹²⁸ Only starting from the end of the '60s does Medea, in all her complexity, become the object of investigation and representation in cinema, together with a few other privileged 'tragic' subjects, such as Oedipus and Electra. Differently from other artistic media that have been so far examined, and despite her undoubted appeal, Medea has received few major treatments in modern cinema. Worth mentioning are *Medea* (1969–1970) by the Italian director, screenwriter and eclectic author Pier Paolo Pasolini, *A Dream of Passion* (1978) by the American director Jules Dassin, and *Medea* (1988) by the Danish director and screewriter Lars von Trier. They all are not mere records of pre-existing stage performance; on the contrary, they can be counted among the most significant re-workings of the mythic narrative in any medium in the 20th-century.¹²⁹

Controversial, at times hermeneutic and sometimes dismissed with rigid criticism, Pasolini's movie seems to be the most known and studied. The Italian director does not confine himself to the time and place covered by the Greek model, i.e., 'Medea in Corinth'. He rather enlarges the plot to include the Argonauts' search for the Golden Fleece, the landing in Iolcus upon their return from Colchis, the Pelias episode, the flight from Iolcus and the final settlement in Corinth, where the tragedy of Euripides 'takes place'. A double prelude prefaces the central story, establishing a mythic background for both main characters as they are represented each in one's own world: a modern, rationalistic, bourgeois world (seen *in fieri*) for Jason, and a primitive, sacred, and magic world for Medea. Through the juxtaposition of these two antithetic worlds, Pasolini subtly gives the viewers the key, or at least the main key, for accessing his reception and re-working of Euripides' *Medea*, i.e., as emblem of the clash between Western and Eastern Culture, Progress/Technology and Primitivism, First and Third world, Colonizers and Colonized. Jason and Medea are two symbolic characters embodying the cultural and political polarity of the world as a whole.¹³⁰ The polarity is indeed the privileged formal criterion

127 Mimoso-Ruiz (1980) 216.

128 On a re-assessment of this movie, see Winkler (1991) 55–7.

129 Christie (2000) 164.

130 See Fusillo (1996). On the 'polar opposite' attributes as an essential component of Pasolini's *Medea*, see also Borie-Svenstedt (1970); Nowell-Smit (1977) 15–6.

that informs Pasolini's cinematic re-working of Euripides' play; it is a *signifier* that coincides with its *significance*. The double, juxtaposed, prelude (*signifier*) serves to convey the polarity of Jason and Medea's world (*significance*). The prelude pertaining to Jason is in turn built on the polarity of his tutor, Chiron, half animal (horse) and half man, a *signifier* in itself of the polarity nature/'techne', primitive/progress, sacred/rational, child/adult. As Jason ages from childhood to adulthood, Chiron loses his 'animal' pole and become fully human, and as such fully realistic, rational, and 'desecrated'.¹³¹ In his mythic, mixt form, while tutoring the child Jason, Chiron enunciates the sacredness of the Universe. In his full human form, in his last instructions for the adult Jason, he pushes Jason to aim at the throne and thus to accomplish his political ambitions. In other words, this 'fully human' Chiron *accordingly* introduces Jason to the 'human' world, i.e., to the progressive, pragmatic, exploitative, rationalistic, and desecrated culture that is typical of the Western world.¹³² Close to the conclusion of his education of Jason, Chiron states, "Indeed, there is no God".¹³³ Significantly this sentence marks the transition to the other prelude that introduces Medea in Colchis,¹³⁴ fully immersed in her sacred world, the polar opposite to that of Jason. Medea is first portrayed while she is preparing to officiate over a fertility rite with a human sacrifice. The polarity is in turn emphasized by the different 'medium' through which each world expresses itself: the words of Chiron yield now to the silence of Medea, a sacred silence interrupted, as the rite requires, by ritual cries. Medea's ritual killing of youth chosen for the sacrifice foreshadows, in some way, her 'ritual' killing of her own children at the conclusion of the story.¹³⁵ Still juxtaposing scenes related to Jason—who meanwhile is visiting his uncle Pelias to claim his legitimate throne—and scenes related to Medea, the two polar worlds are continuously contrasted to each other. The arrival of the Argonauts in Colchis is in fact described as an invasion, as a violation of that sacred place by Jason and his men, who more resemble bandits. They pillage the peasant villages of the area, and steal horses as if they have a right to do so. A political dimension overlaps the basic polar representation of the clash between the two worlds: Jason becomes the symbol

131 See Christie (2000) 151.

132 See Pasolini (1991) 482–3 (Visione 11). For this concept of sacred and desecrated which also informs Chiron's teaching, Pasolini—as he himself stated—took inspiration from Eliade's work on the history of religions (1948).

133 Pasolini (1991) 546 (Dialoghi: Scena 19).

134 This part of the film was recorded in Turkey, to resemble, in some way, the ancient Colchis.

135 This link is also marked by the music: the initial music, accompanying the scene of the sacrifice, returns at the end.

of colonialism and of the violent, repressive politics that colonialism implies. His journey to Colchis, rather than a realization of a hero's 'destiny', becomes a parable that denounces the "ethical bankruptcy of cultural imperialism".¹³⁶ These violent scenes contrast with those portraying Medea immersed in a sacred silence and in her thoughts. The movie proceeds in a strongly elliptical style. As often happens in Pasolini's films, much is entrusted to silence and glances.¹³⁷ The Italian director exploits to extreme the peculiarity of cinema itself, which consists of making 'things' to be seen. For most of this movie, above all after the appearance of Medea, Pasolini makes the spectators see phases of a story life, rather than a sequence of events chronologically organized, through Medea's eyes and mind. Her falling in love with Jason, for instance, is only represented visually and concisely, without any verbal exchange between the two: after Jason enters in the temple where Medea is, the latter faints. The reaction, while symbolizing the destructive power of love, is, indeed, a proleptic hint at the 'fatal' relation. In that moment the 'sacred' music always accompanying Medea's appearance stops: the desecration process, ultimately leading Medea to a loss of identity, starts. *Tutto resta muto, isolato, indecifrabile* ("All is quite, estranged, indecipherable").¹³⁸ The anguished glance that Medea, once she regains consciousness, directs toward the golden fleece foreshadows the followings phases. Still without any verbal exchange with Jason, nor with even a hint at Jason's request of the fleece from the king of Colchis, the woman is seen while stealing the fleece. Failing at the first attempt, Medea seeks her brother's help. Once they have stolen the fleece together, they bring it to Jason's camp. Still without any exchange between the two, the flight is arranged. The following events, from Aeetes' attempt to stop their flight to their new flight from Iolcus after Pelias' murder and their landing in Corinth, are condensed into a few scenes. In all these sequences Medea utters few words, which significantly reveal her complete disorientation, alienation, and loss of identity, now that she has been eradicated from her sacred world. As soon as they have landed in Iolcus, Medea realizes her displacement as she fails to hear the voice of those who have once constituted her sacred, primitive world: sun, earth, grass, and stones. She looks at them but does not recognize them. It is not her world. She cries against Jason's men who, once they have landed, encamp without first performing the required rituals to the gods. They have desecrated the land, but nobody 'understands' her and her notion of the sacred. Euripides' and, foremost, Seneca's powerful witch becomes a lonely,

136 See also Kvistad (2010) 227.

137 Regarding this, see, e.g., Lauriola (2011) 41–5.

138 Pasolini (1991) 497 (Visione 44).

helpless woman who experiences love for Jason as her only 'harbor'. Proceeding elliptically, Pasolini moves to one of the basic episodes of Medea's life in Corinth, getting back to Euripides' text: the first act of her revenge, that is, the killing of Glauce/Creusa and Creon. Pasolini brilliantly re-works the original through a double scene centering on the revenge: the vision/dream-scene and the real execution-scene. Perfectly in line with the above-mentioned polar structure that informs the entire movie, it is as if Pasolini wants to offer a double version of the same event: the mythic/oneiric one and the real/rationalistic version. First comes the 'dreamlike' version that occurs at the very beginning of the Corinth phase. Medea is at her first appearance in Corinth and witnesses a male dance that involves Jason outside the royal palace. The entire scene is represented from Medea's point of view by alternating the focus on Medea watching Jason's dance and on Jason dancing as seen by Medea. Striking is the contrast between the anguished face of the woman, who is in tears, and the joyful, carefree activity in which Jason is completely immersed. This polarity serves to emphasize the sense of exclusion and isolation of Medea, a stranger to Jason's world. Withdrawing in her room, lying on her bed with eyes closed, Medea experiences a vision in which she first has a dialogue with the god Sun, who pushes her to action. She then reveals her plan for revenge to her maids, who are a substitution for the chorus of Corinthian women of Euripides' play. At this stage, Medea does not make any reference to the killing of Glauce and her children (cf., *contra*, Euripides, *Medea* 764–823). In this vision-dream the repetition of the invocation to God (a substitution for Zeus) and to justice, which in Euripides marks the *incipit* of Medea's exposition of her plan, only implies a wish for revenge. Indeed, there is not a clear declaration of her plan. The camera subtly focuses on the fire and the crown: both are a clear prolepsis to the events that will come. Medea asks the nurse to go for Jason, revealing her intention to fake a reconciliation. Jason comes with the children; the sad, anguished glance of Medea toward the children conveys an allusion, though obscure, to their destiny. After the scene representing Jason, followed by his children, on the way to the palace, the focus shifts to Glauce, who looks at herself in the mirror wearing Medea's gifts. While in Euripides, at this moment, Glauce is portrayed as 'full of joy' (ll. 1161–5), in the movie, at this point, she appears sad and anguished until her death comes. She is consumed by fire, and so is his father in the attempt to save her. The focus is now on Medea, who is in tears. This seals the end of Medea's vision. The spectator now realizes that it was a kind of dream, something belonging to Medea's imagination, as the scene immediately following portrays Glauce alive. She is in her room and appears like in Medea's vision, i.e., in anguish. The focus suddenly shifts to the encounter between Creon and Medea, which is a re-working of the episode of

the original play (Euripides, *Medea* 271–356) with a significant addition by Pasolini. Creon justifies his banishment: it is only for the love of her daughter, who is overwhelmed by a sense of guilt toward Medea and is far away from being happy for the wedding. This innovation reveals Pasolini's intention to turn the 'drama' of Creon and Glauce into a psychological one, where the sense of guilt prevails. An encounter between Medea and Jason then follows. It refigures the second episode of Euripides' play (ll. 446–626), where Medea reminds the hero of her merits in his success. In Pasolini's adaptation, the dialogue is far shorter and emphasizes the ingratitude and arrogance of Jason, who grants his success not even to Aphrodite's help, by only to himself. Hence the plan for revenge follows: Medea sends her gift to Glauce through her children; Glauce is alone in her room, and, differently from the 'vision/dreamlike' version, her dressing is represented as an individual action rather than a collective one involving her maids. Her solitude foreshadows, in a way, her lonely death. Differently from the vision, Glauce commits suicide and so does his father. Through the double version of this basic event of the tragedy of Medea (the vision and the factual happening), Pasolini perhaps meant to create a double, polar way of reception: mythic and realistic, magic and rational. The 'mythic' and 'magic' can only occur in the form of a dream/vision, since Medea has lost them in her conversion to the realistic and rational world of Jason, a world that remains, however, a stranger to her. The final infanticide is thus the inevitable eradication of Medea from her sacred homeland. Not accidentally it is conceived and described as a ritual sacrifice, which recalls the initial one. But the initial sacrifice differs from the final one for, as has been described above, it is performed in the sacred land of Colchis and inscribed in that land's religion. The 'sacrifice' of her own children in Corinth, a desecrated world, thus becomes an empty repetition of a ritual devoid of its sacred value; it becomes something 'unnatural'. As such this sacrifice is the final result of the clash between the two cultures, with Jason being guilty of not having realized the cultural otherness of Medea.¹³⁹ To Pasolini, *Medea* is the story of an irresolvable conflict: *Niente è più possibile, ormai* ("Nothing else is now possible, any more," scene 97) are the very last words of Medea who commits suicide by burning in her own house.¹⁴⁰ Her annihilation would denounce the suppression of the sacred in the modern, rational, and secular Western world, as well as the violence, destruction, and exploitation brought about in the Third World by Western colonialism and

139 This is in particular the conclusion of Fusillo's analysis (1996).

140 I should note that this (i.e., suicide and burning her own house) was also the ending of Anouilh's *Médée* (on which, see above n. 62).

the imperialistic politics of the First World.¹⁴¹ As is typical of most of Pasolini's works, his own several comments characterizing the screenplay and the cinematic rendition reveal a process of intense reflection upon the nature of the texts and the media with which the director deals. And this is why Pasolini's *Medea*, as well as other of his works, can be, and have been, included in the category of metatragedy/metatheatre.¹⁴² Above all the dream/vision of *Medea* presents features of self-reflexive commentary on the film on itself and on the Greek tragedy.¹⁴³

The cinematic rendition of Jules Dassin, *A Dream of Passion* (1978), is to be included in this same category of metatragedy or metatheatre as well. It is, indeed, a film-within-a film which aims at testing the relevance of Euripides' *Medea* to modern times, by showing the psychological, institutional, and social mechanism by which Greek tragedy becomes relevant to modern actors and, subsequently, to their audience.¹⁴⁴ It portrays a television crew that is supposed to record the production of Euripides' play and to interview its participants.¹⁴⁵ Screened at the Cannes Festival in 1978, the film was originally entitled *Cri de Femmes* ("Cry of Women"), which evokes the female cry that marks the beginning and the end of the movie, in both cases conveying the reaction of the chorus to the infanticide. This film, however, is most known under the English title (*A Dream of Passion*), which alludes at the metatheatricity of the film itself. A motto from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (II. 2. 546) precedes the head-titles. This motto is about the irony according to which an actor can express a passion that is a stranger to him well, while a person who should have reason to feel that passion may be incapable of expressing it. It clearly foreshadows the essential problem that, in the movie, torments the protagonist Maia. She plays the role of an actress who goes back to Athens to perform the role of *Medea* in a production of Euripides' play. Although Maia has some personality traits in common with Euripides' heroine, she is not able to reproduce her role adequately and to charge her character with some modernity. Maia thus accepts to meet

141 For this kind of reading see, in particular, Kvistad (2010), who also discusses the possibility that the infanticide itself represents a political provocation (p. 234).

142 MacKinnon (1986) 146–54.

143 Further observations in Fusillo (1996) 175–6.

144 Michelakis (2004) 207–8.

145 Rubino (2000) 26–8; Christie (2000) 170–8. Very similar to Dassin's cinematic re-working, above all in terms of metatheatre, is *Summer of Medea*, a film by Babis Plaitakis (1987): it is about the Greek director and the French protagonist of a production of Euripides' *Medea* in professional and personal crisis, mirroring the clash of two different world-views: see Michelakis (2004) 206.

a real mother who had killed her children to take revenge against her husband who, after bringing her in Europe, a foreign land, abandoned her. This woman is an American by the name of Brenda, who is in Athens' prison. The movie is rather about the relationship and mutual understanding between these two Medeas (i.e., Maia, the actress who must interpret Medea, and Brenda, the real Medea who has already killed her children) and is built on three narrative levels. The first pertains to the life in prison of Brenda, seen as crazy and whose murder is re-proposed in form of flash-back. The focus here, however, is on the condition of women. The second level pertains to the activity of the cast that should perform the play: their works on the stage reveal the crisis in which each member of the cast is involved. The third level pertains to the daily life of Maia, the main actress who gradually becomes aware of herself as a protagonist of life and fiction whose boundaries are at times not separable. She lives her life, interprets Medea and dreams to be Brenda, the mother-killer. This is her passion. The continuous shift from life to fiction, from sequences portraying the rehearsal of the play to sequences pertaining to the real life of both Medeas, is one of the most engaging features of this film. Dassin investigates the ancient play to comment on dramas from contemporary chronicles. He uses lines written in the past to test and verify the events from the present. His film, where the 'real' Medea has already killed her children, can be seen as a long epilogue of this contemporary drama, an attempt to explain it by delving into the female psyche *a posteriori*.

Lars von Trier's *Medea* is a seventy-five-minutes film made for television in 1988 and based on the unrealized Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Medea* scenario. Although made in the spirit of an homage to Dreyer, the Danish director clearly claims that his film is the result of a personal interpretation of his master's unrealized material and, we may add, of Euripides' tragedy itself. Indeed, von Trier's film is acclaimed as a true development of Euripides' play.¹⁴⁶ 'Medea's divided self', i.e., her inner conflict and the ensuing revenge, above all the infanticide, are the peculiarly Euripidean features that von Trier develops with a variety of cinematic techniques ultimately linked to, or evoking, the ancient stage and performance. Regarding this, it is worth noting that he exploits the sights and the sounds of the landscape chosen as a 'stage' for his film, i.e., the northern coast of Denmark. His soundtrack reproduces the sounds that the Athenian audience likely would have heard in an open-air theatre overlooking a busy harbor, such as the creak of boat cables, the breaking of waves, the chirping of birds, and so forth. The film begins with these sounds (Prologue section), which gradually become softer as the spectators listen to the lapping

146 Rubino (2000) 40–1; Joseph/Johnson (2008).

of waves, a bird call, and Medea's gasp for air as she emerges from the sea. Since the beginning, water represents Medea's world: lying on a tidal flat, she occupies a liminal space where land and sea meet. As she emerges from the sea, she sees Aegeus' ship approaching. To Aegeus, who asks how things are going with Jason, she immediately asks for help. Von Trier's altering of the order of Euripides' plot gives the impression that the story is told through flashbacks, i.e., as Medea's recollection of the events that led her to the decision to kill her children. The very early appearance of Aegeus indeed signals that, since the beginning, Medea knows what she needs from the Athenian king: not simply a place of refuge, as we read in Euripides, but also a means of escape, the ship. Interestingly from the beginning von Trier uses the technique of cinematic montage¹⁴⁷ to evoke Medea's infanticide, connecting it with her escape. He indeed matches the upward cruciform shape of the mast of the ship with a cut to the film's logo. This logo reproduces the name of Medea with the central 'd' forming the tree where the woman hanged her children, whose bodies are barely seen. This earlier positioning of the murder of the children shows the main interest of von Trier' re-working: Medea as essentially a mother-killer. The other two main innovations by von Trier, while re-enforcing the image of Medea that he is presenting, are also consistent with the story being told from Medea's perspective and her recollection of the planned infanticide. These innovations pertain to the larger role of Glauce and to the representation of the infanticide itself through a slow-motion-killing of the children by hanging rather than stabbing them off-stage. As for Glauce, she represents polyvalent significance. She is the younger counterpart of Medea, a virginal version of herself. But she is also the visualization of Medea's prediction that Jason's marriage with her will have a fatal end. Through a dialectical montage, von Trier matches Glauce's first glance in her mirror (scene 2) with her last glance when she look at herself wearing the poisoned crown sent by Medea (scene 18). Furthermore, recalling the stereotypical woman as beautiful outside and conniving and evil inside, von Trier contrasts her look of child-like innocence to her innate knowledge of sexual weaponry. Glauce refuses to sleep with Jason on their wedding night, asking for a proof that she is the one, thus demanding to wait until her father banishes Medea. This innovation serves to arouse empathy for Medea, as Glauce's ethereal quality by contrast emphasizes her sinister character. The contrast, which favors, in a way, Medea is deepened through other visual symbols: contrary to a silvery-white Glauce, Medea wears black, a color that symbolizes her desolation; her body is completely covered

147 This is a technique consisting of selecting and ordering images so as to give the audience the sense of being alive (not fictional characters, stories, etc.) and to enable them to experience something similar to the flow of time: see Eisenstein (1977) 45–7.

by the black costume, as is her head. All this indicates her melancholy and anguish. The other, perhaps more important innovation pertains to the killing of her children: while the way of killing them is clearly foreshadowed at the very beginning through the combination of the means of escape, Aegeus' ship, and the cut on the film's logo, the idea of involving them in her revenge is also implied clearly since the beginning. As Medea first ponders revenge (scene 8) her sleeping children appear in a rear projection behind the woman, a projection that pulsates similarly to amniotic fluid when seen through sonography. As soon as Medea speaks of Jason's betrayal and expresses her wish to take revenge, the image of the children in the rear becomes larger, to consume the frame with Medea still in focus in front of them. The director stresses the role of Medea as a caring and loving mother throughout the movie through domestic scenes, the purpose being to strike the audience with the almost unbearable death scene, where Medea hangs first the younger child and then helps the older one to hang himself. The contrast between the domestic scenes and the death scene, represented as just described, serves to visualize and develop, in a way, the inner turmoil of Medea. Her anguish and the burden of her decision are emphasized through sounds of nature. The bird's cry, which opens the film and serves to calm Medea's desperation as she lies on the tidal flat, now becomes incessant while she hangs the younger boy and struggles over taking the life of the other one. She is silent while the bird's cry becomes a nerve-wracking experience for the audience and conjures up the nerve-wracking thoughts of betrayal, revenge, and death. These thoughts have gradually obsessed Medea as the film has progressed. "Something I love" are the only words that Medea is able to utter in response to the older son who asks what she is hanging in the tree. In this scene, among other things, particularly striking are both the complicity of the older son in hanging the brother as Medea agonizes in executing her plan, and the subsequent suicide as this son himself puts the rope around his neck. It might be read as a result of the realization that both of them must die to complete their mother's revenge on their faithless father;¹⁴⁸ or it can be interpreted as "a key autobiographical theme . . . that children are being sacrificed for the selfish desires of adults";¹⁴⁹ alluding to the troubled childhood of von Trier. Whatever reasons are behind this innovation, it certainly serves to unfold Medea's divided self and her inner conflict in a way that is true to the nature of the heroine in the original Greek play. In this light, von Trier's film is indeed a homage to the 'original' Master, i.e., Euripides.¹⁵⁰

148 Christie (2002) 157.

149 Beltzer (2002).

150 There is a peculiar movie that has been associated to Euripides' *Medea*, although it does not have anything to do with it, unless one subscribes to a specific literary theory,

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Medea*

Scholarly study of the reception of Greek tragedy has developed extensively since late 1960s, increasing exponentially in the very last decades. While it varies from the study of adaptations in literature to studies pertaining to the engagement of the ancient works with modern and contemporary fine arts and cinema, a special development has been concerned with performance on the modern stage, which should not come as a surprise considering the literary genre to which this product of the ancient Greek world, called ‘tragedy’, belongs. Besides the creation of the electronic scholarly journal *Didaskalia* (since 1994), fully devoted to analysis and reviews of modern performance of ancient drama, the endeavour undertaken by Edith Hall and Oliver Taplin at Oxford (since 1996), that is, the establishment of an Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD),¹⁵¹ is a clear sign of the increasing contemporary interest in the field. Within this frame, as one may expect, the amount of the scholarship varies according to the longevity of the given tragedy’s *after-life*. Hence it does not come as a surprise that the scholarly works on modern engagements with Euripides’ *Medea* are uncountable. There is space here only to mention a few among the major book-length studies, to provide a sense of the work that has been so far done.¹⁵² The classification by which the following concise history of scholarship is organized is not to be taken rigidly, in that inevitable overlapping (time/place/theme) occurs.

as I shall detail below. The movie is *The Others* (2001) by the Chilean-Spanish director Alejandro Amenábar; Isabel Torrance (2010) is the scholar who proposes its connection with Euripides’ *Medea*. On the ground of a thesis she herself created, Torrance states the possibility of recognizing two kinds of Medea in modern works of reception: an *identifiably* Medea, and a *retrospectively* Medea. The first, for instance, is exactly the kind of Pasolini’s, Dassin’s and von Trier’s Medea, i.e., a woman resembling, in the intention of the author, most features of the original so that the identification, despite the adaptation process, is quite overt, as the woman’s name itself suggests. The second kind occurs when “one has the identity of Medea applied to her as a result of an act associable to her act,” (p. 126), and usually this common act is the infanticide. In the light of a *retrospectively* Medea figure, Torrance analyzes the film *The Others*. Although her reconstruction, or, better, deconstruction—as in a way the scholar recognizes—is well argued, agreeing to see this movie as a case of the reception of Euripides’ *Medea* would require us to subscribe to a post-structuralist theory of intertextuality where the authorial intention does not matter as long as the newly created meaning makes sense for the viewer or, in the case of a text, for the reader (for these literary theories, see Allen, 2000, esp. 61–132).

151 On this archive, see above, p. 95.

152 For a concise overview of the major scholarly studies which, through different approaches and focuses, embrace the reception of Greek drama as a whole, see Wringley (2011) 381–4; Foley (2012) xi–xii.

Some studies are either collections of essays or single-authored books with an analysis of the *Medea*'s reception arranged diachronically. Such is the case of the pioneering book of Mallinger (1897) and of some more recent books, namely, Mimoso-Ruiz (1980) and Hall/Macintosh/Taplin (2000). Other studies have privileged an interdisciplinary approach. This is the case, for instance, of Clauss/Johnston (1997) and Bartel/Simon (2010).

Other works, either books or extensive essays, have focused on specific geographical areas of reception, from Europe to Africa, North America and Cuba (e.g., Hilton/Gosling 2007), only to mention a few. Such are, for instance, the works by: Friedrich (1968) for Germany; Uglione (1997) and Gentili/Perusino (2000) for Italy; Van Zyl Smit (2007a, 2007b and 2007c) for South Africa; Hall (2005) for England; Foley (2012, esp. 190–228) on the American side; Coehlo (2013) for Brazil (specifically in the 20th century).

Some works deal with a specific field of *Medea*'s reception. Particularly interesting and informative is the comprehensive treatment of this play in cinema by McDonald (1983).

Finally, there are studies approaching the reception of Euripides' *Medea* by focusing on a specific theme. These, perhaps, constitute the majority of reception studies on *Medea*. To mention a few, worth noting are *Medea: Irish Version*—for the otherness/outsider theme and feminist rebellion to patriarchal system (Dillon/Wilmer 2005: 136–68); *Female Solidarity: Timely Resistance in Greek Tragedy*—for the theme of solidarity among women in their fight against male oppression (Dillon/Wilmer 2005: 177–92), and Corti (1998) for the main, crucial theme of this tragedy, i.e., the infanticide.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

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Hippolytus

Rosanna Lauriola

Δεινότερον οὐδὲν ἄλλο μητρικῆς κακόν, “No evil is more terrible than a stepmother,”¹ the poet Menander (ca. 3rd century BC) once said (fr. 189 Jaekel). Before him, the Euripidean Alcestis, asking Admetus to look upon their children after she is gone, has begged her husband not to marry again, “for a stepmother comes in as a foe to the previous children, no more gentle than a viper,” (Euripides, *Alcestis* 308–9). Promptly ‘borrowing’ her words, in the preamble of his tirade against the female gender, “dux malorum” (“leader of all evils”), Seneca’s *Hippolytus* refers to the stepmothers as someone “mitius nil [est] feris” (“not more gentle than the beasts,” Seneca, *Phaedra* 558–60). And if Medea is the paradigm of the worst spouse ever, she who alone is the evidence that women are an accursed race (Seneca, *Phaedra* 563), *Phaedra* is the paradigm of the worst stepmother ever, being “Colchide noverca maius . . . , maius malum” (“a greater, far greater evil than the Colchian stepmother,” Seneca, *Phaedra* 697), that is, worse than the worst spouse, Medea, the woman from Colchis who, in turn, was also a ‘noverca’ to Theseus.

Phaedra: a woman and a stepmother, that is, the ‘non plus ultra’ of evil, a ‘ruinous creature’ of the man’s house for draining its prosperity (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 625–34), promoter of insane passions for which household, peoples and kingdoms fall (Seneca, *Phaedra* 560–2). *Phaedra*: ‘the’ woman that handed to posterity the name of *Hippolytus*. *Hippolytus*, who happens to be *Phaedra*’s step-son, is the object of her passion. It is this passion that marks, in the end, the highest degree of evil from this woman and stepmother. *Phaedra* falls in love with one she should not: *Hippolytus*, her stepson. Ironically what makes *Phaedra* be negatively associated with the stepmother’s figure is not the hostility and the jealousy toward the children of a former marriage, such feelings that are commonly ascribed to stepmothers. *Phaedra*, in fact, does not come in as foe to her stepson with the intention of destabilizing his ties with his father so that she might favor herself and her own children in the household and kingdom. This is a ‘scam’ that stereotypically sanctions the negative portrait of a stepmother, a ‘scam’ that Medea (as stepmother of Theseus) indeed attempted. And yet, compared to *Phaedra*, Medea is even a ‘minus malum’ (“a lesser evil”). The ‘malum’ of *Phaedra* is one “quod in novercam

1 All translations, from any language into English, are mine, unless differently indicated in the footnotes.

cadere vix credas... ("which you would barely believe that could befall a step-mother," Seneca, *Phaedra* 638). *Phaedra* does not hate her stepson; she loves him 'excessively', i.e., in a way that exceeds the 'norm'. Hence the image of *Phaedra* as a transgressive woman, a 'malafemmina' ("bad woman"), originates in antiquity and persists until today, if not in all the factual re-adaptations of the story, certainly in the minds and first thoughts of many of us. To aggravate *Phaedra's* position is her false accusation of rape that, ultimately, causes the death of the young *Hippolytus*. From this comes the equation *Phaedra*-witch and *Hippolytus*-innocent victim, almost a martyr, unfairly paying for a crime he never committed. This is the 'tragedy' of *Hippolytus*. Yet *Phaedra* is the one who for centuries has attracted the attention of writers, poets, thinkers, artists, directors... . *Phaedra*, too, dies unfairly, paying for a feeling she did not choose to have. Either because of *Aphrodite*, or because of a state of mind that one can control but cannot willingly plan to have, *Phaedra*, too, might be seen as a victim. Certainly she is still a victim of a deeply rooted patriarchal way of thinking that would only reluctantly consider her story from her perspective. For bad or for good, the memory of her anguished love for *Hippolytus* has spread and survived. "Everyone,"—*Pausanias* once wrote (2nd century AD)—"even a foreigner who has learned Greek, knows about the love of *Phaedra*," (*Description of Greece* 1.22.1). Indeed, true to *Artemis's* words (*Euripides*, *Hippolytus* 1429–30), *Phaedra's* love has not disappeared namelessly.

In Literature

Phaedra is mentioned for the first time in the extant literature by *Homer* within the catalogue of women that parade in front of *Odysseus* during his *katabasis*. Here she is appropriately positioned in the company of *Procris* and *Ariadne*, i.e., with women linked to *Crete* and *Athens*, to *Minos's* house, all suffering from an unhappy, 'fatal' love and dealing, to a different degree, with a transgression of the 'laws' of marriage (*Odyssey* 11. 321–2).² *Phaedra* and, with her, *Hippolytus*³

2 According to various versions of the myth pertaining to *Procris* and *Ariadne*, both women's lives had to do with *Minos/Crete*, *Artemis* and a troubled 'marital' life (for *Procris*, see, e.g., *Ovid*, *Metamorphoses* 7. 661–865; *Hyginus Fabulae* 189; for *Ariadne*, see, e.g., *Apollodorus*, *Epitome* 1. 8–9). As to the early poetic references to *Phaedra's* story, see, e.g., *Mills* (2002) 26–7; *Halleran* (2004) 269–70.

3 Undoubtedly the fame of *Phaedra* and *Hippolytus* goes inextricably hand by hand. It is, however, significant that most of the subsequent works inspired by the Euripidean play are entitled after *Phaedra*, rather than after *Hippolytus*. As for *Euripides* himself, as *Paduano* puts it (2000) 19, the *Hippolytus* is in the end a *Phaedra*. Without denying the tragic caliber

seem not to have had any special appeal for poets and artists before landing on the stage in the 5th-century plays of Sophocles and Euripides. While the first extensive account of the unforgettable love of Phaedra survives in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, which in turn constitutes the matrix of subsequent *Phaedra(s)*, Sophocles, too, treated the story in the now-lost tragedy *Phaedra*.⁴ The play by Euripides that decreed the *Nachleben* of Phaedra's tragic love is actually the product of the poet's second thoughts.⁵ Euripides, in fact, wrote two plays on the same theme, the second of which is a 'sanitizing' revision of the first, with all that was ἀπρεπές ("indecorous") and κατηγορίας ἄξιον ("blameworthy") having been eliminated.⁶ Phaedra's falling in love with her stepson was *per se* reprehensible, an ἄρρητον ("something unspeakable," *Hippolytus* 602)—or *nefas* ("execrable, impious") to use Seneca's words,⁷ as it bordered on an incestuous relationship.⁸ But her propositioning him directly was something even more outrageous, something so indecent that it caused Hippolytus to hide his head in horror—an apotropaic gesture of repugnance that gained him the epithet of *Kalyptomenos* ("Veiling/Hiding himself"). *Hippolytus Kalyptomenos* is indeed

of Hippolytus and the masterpiece of affliction and distress of the final scene, the woman's inner 'tragedy' tends, in fact, to exert much more effect on the mind.

- 4 Scholars tend to agree that Sophocles' *Phaedra* was composed in between the two Euripidean *Hippolytus* plays (e.g., Barrett 1964), and that it was in response to the failure of Euripides' *Hippolytus Veiled*. Sophocles would ennoble the woman, making her a queen of Athens whose husband is dead (a motif that Seneca repeats, slightly changing the fact of Theseus' death into a rumor). She thus needs to provide the town with a new king. Being a widow makes her love 'less guilty'. For a detailed analysis of the eighteen fragments that survived from Sophocles' lost play, see Casanova (2003) 5–22. For a different, new hypothesis about the date of Sophocles' *Phaedra*, see Gelli (2003) 23–38.
- 5 See McDermott 2000 (with plenty of bibliographical references on the issue).
- 6 This is what the grammarian Aristophanes of Byzantium (3rd century BC) states in the so-called second *Hypothesis* (Diggle [1984] 29–30) to Euripides' *Hippolytus*: see McDermott (2000) 239–40; Mills (2002) 29–30.
- 7 *Nefas* and *nefandus* are, indeed, recurrent key terms connoting the passion of Phaedra and of her family's members: see, e.g., Seneca *Phaedra* 126, 143, 153, 166, 173, 254, 596, 678. On Seneca's adaptation, see below, pp. 453–7.
- 8 *Miscere thalamos patris et nati apparas / uteroque prolem capere confusam impio?* ("Are you planning to mix and share father' and son's bed, and to receive a blended progeny in an incestuous womb?"), the nurse asks Phaedra while prompting her to give up to her feelings (Seneca, *Phaedra* 171–2). The feeling of Phaedra for Hippolytus would not be incestuous, strictly speaking; the two, in fact, are non-blood relatives, which dilutes the incest taboo: see Messer (1969) 213–4, 218. A different kind of incest seems actually to be involved: see below, p. 455 and n. 45.

the title of Euripides' first tragedy.⁹ The direct 'advances' of Phaedra toward her stepson rather than the incestuous nuance of her feeling were what shocked the audience,¹⁰ to the point that Euripides was urged to revise his play. Indeed, the valiant struggle of Phaedra in the extant tragedy to suppress her love by keeping it quiet (*Hippolytus* 291–5) and by demanding silence from her nurse (e.g., *Hippolytus* 498–9, 520), once she failed in keeping her feeling secret (*Hippolytus* 330–53), 'redirects' her to take the place that the current social conventions expected from women: that of silence and invisibility.¹¹ This is a Phaedra to whom the audience could more relate, a woman who suffers in silence and does not take the infidelity of Theseus as an extenuating circumstance for her passion and action.¹² This Phaedra is a woman concerned—as

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- 9 As well known, this title serves to distinguish the first, lost version from the extant one, which in turn is known as *Hippolytus Stephanephoros* ("Hippolytus Crowned"): see, e.g., Biondi (2008) 196. Both titles would allude differently to the purity of Hippolytus: while the latter refers to the *incipit* of the play (ll. 72–3) where the youth addresses Artemis' statue while offering her a garland (*stephanos*), the first (*kalypomenos*) would refer to the above-mentioned apotropaic act of the youth at the moment of Phaedra's declaration of her love: Mills (2002) 29; Halleran (2004) 271–2. Among the modern adaptations in which the 'veil' plays a major role, there is *Fedra* by the Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio (on which, see below, pp. 462–4). According to Guglielminetti (1985) 34–6, D'Annunzio's *Fedra* is, indeed, a re-adaptation of the *Hippolytus Kalypomenos* rather than of the extant tragedy: in D'Annunzio the veil plays an important role in Phaedra's hands for it is used by the woman to cover Hippolytus' corpse, by way of an almost religious observance, and to seal her union in death with that gesture. For a different interpretation of the veil of Hippolytus, see, also, Moricca (1915).
- 10 The parodic reference of the 5th-century BC comic playwright Aristophanes in *Frogs* 1043, 1052–4 testifies to the striking effect that Euripides' *first* Phaedra had on the audience. The Phaedra who propositions the youth directly is, however, consistent with a stereotype called 'Potiphar's wife' (from *Genesis* 39). On the 'Potiphar's wife' motif, see Thompson (1955–1958) 4.474–5; 5.386; Rubino (2008) 18–9. See also below, n. 55.
- 11 Speech, silence, and their consequences are a centerpiece in this play (see below, p. 448). On the other hand, silence and invisibility were the expected 'virtues' from women. It would be enough to remember Ajax's words to keep Tecmessa quiet: "To women silence brings decorum" (Sophocles, *Aias* 293). More eloquent are the words of Hippolytus himself in his misogynistic tirade: the youth dreams for an almost complete annihilation of women and wants to keep them always inside, dwelling with *voiceless* beasts, so that they cannot address anyone nor can they be heard in turn (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 645–8).
- 12 In the first *Hippolytus* Euripides portrayed Theseus as a philanderer who went on a dangerous mission in the Underworld to abduct Persephones. On Phaedra's recrimination of Theseus' infidelity, cf. Ovid, *Heroides* ("Letters of Heroines") 4. 127 (on which, below, pp. 450–3); Seneca, *Phaedra* 91–5, 224. On the other hand, Theseus was well-known for his polygamy: see Mills (2002) 74.

a good woman should be—with her public reputation (e.g., *Hippolytus* 400–25, 687–8, 709, 715–21).¹³ And because of this concern, gradually backed into a corner, she will turn her concealing of the truth into a mystification of the truth through the well-known false accusation of rape. Had Phaedra kept silent about her feelings, Hippolytus would have been saved, but still there would have been a tragedy of Phaedra, for she would die silently consumed by her love-sickness.¹⁴ In Euripides' revised *Hippolytus* all seems to be played around being silent and being compelled to talk and to communicate.¹⁵ Phaedra does not want to tell the nurse the cause of her anguish, but she is compelled to by the peculiar form of communication that the nurse adopts, i.e., the supplication (*Hippolytus* 325, 330, 335). Supplication, in fact, implies the sacred obligation to grant the suppliant her/his request.¹⁶ Hippolytus, on the other hand, wants to tell Theseus the cause of Phaedra's false accusation, but he is compelled to be silent by a peculiarly binding condition, i.e., an oath (*Hippolytus* 601, 1063),¹⁷ under which the nurse communicated to the youth what she was supposed to keep silent. And the *fulcrum* of this tragic game of keeping silent and yet being compelled to speak is something 'that cannot be spoken' (ἄρρητον, *Hippolytus* 602), i.e., so horrible that one, almost apotropaically, would neither like to mention nor like to hear. Indeed Phaedra does not want to speak about it to the point that, when she finally yields to the nurse's supplication, she avoids mentioning the name that identifies 'her ἄρρητον'.¹⁸ On the other hand, Hippolytus

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- 13 5th-century Athens was still mainly a 'shame culture' where one was very sensitive to the values of society, and shame was the deterrent to departing from those values: see Cairns (1993) 153–4. On Phaedra's concerns about her good reputation and avoiding shame, see, e.g., Hallaran (2004) 277–9. In some fragments of Sophocles' lost play, too, Phaedra refers to her love in terms of shame rather than in terms of guilt: see Casanova (2003) 10.
 - 14 The metaphor of love as *nosos* ("disease") is very ancient and frequent. For its occurrences in tragedy, see Di Benedetto (1971) 14–5.
 - 15 See Knox (1952) 16.
 - 16 See Longo (1985) 89–90. The act of supplication is one of major importance in the ancient Greek culture; it also involves specific gestures. The nurse indeed performs a ritual supplication, for she takes Phaedra's hands and knees. On the supplication and the ensuing obligations, see Gould (1973).
 - 17 See Longo (1985) 90. Oaths were very important in ancient Greek culture. Notoriously they were 'sacred' in that gods were to sanction them whether they were explicitly summoned or not. Breaking an oath was parallel with offending the gods. Hippolytus eventually conformed to the moral and honor code of the time, keeping silence as he swore. Alongside the force of the oath, the nurse tries also to supplicate Hippolytus by touching his hands (l. 605).
 - 18 "You hear this name from yourself, not from me," Phaedra says to the nurse when she mentions Hippolytus as the one 'responsible' of her mistress' sickness (ll. 351–2). Aristophanes

does not want to even hear that ἄρρητον (*Hippolytus* 602 cf. with 653–4). Both act out of a sense of decency, to conform to accepted standards of respectability, to save their reputation, which is a matter of paramount importance in a society that is still a shame-oriented one.¹⁹ Interestingly, if Phaedra wants to keep her ‘shameful’ feeling silent and hidden to save her own εὖχλεια (“good reputation”), for the same goal Hippolytus would actually like to cry it aloud.²⁰ The failure of these opposite intentions centering on silence and speaking out sets in motion their respective tragedies. Once Phaedra fails to save her reputation through silence, she turns to the complementary solution that she had planned, i.e., death. Yet, now that the unspeakable has been spoken, this is not enough; Phaedra, in fact, speaks too much and distorts the truth, thus ‘activating’ the sequence of events that will cause Hippolytus’ death. Once Hippolytus fails to save his reputation through crying aloud his innocence and revealing the unspeakable, he does speak (e.g., *Hippolytus* 983–1035), but not enough, “for it is not right for me,”—says Hippolytus (l. 1033)—“to speak further.” And, by doing so, he contributes to fulfilling the sequence activated by the ‘excessive’ words of Phaedra.

The tragedy of Hippolytus clearly—at least at first glance—consists of dying unfairly, as an innocent victim of the fatal consequence of someone’s else passion. The unfairness of this end is even more striking if compared with the youth’s efforts to conduct an honest, virtuous life (e.g., *Hippolytus* 1034–5), which, ironically, prevented him from saving himself.²¹ The tragedy of Phaedra seems, instead, to lie on the thin edge between the ‘guilt’ of having nurtured such an unutterable feeling and the ‘guilt’ of having allowed it to be revealed and to have its own course.²² She is often seen as somewhat ‘guilty’: her reluctance to reveal her secret has been seen as insincere,²³ and her request to

parodies this line in *Knights* 16–18; on which Lauriola (2010) 232–3; (2015-forthcoming).

19 See above, n. 13.

20 See Longo (1985) 91.

21 It is worth remembering that Hippolytus swore not to reveal what the nurse had told him about Phaedra. On the importance of oaths in ancient culture, above, n. 17.

22 About the duality of the plotline, see Mills (2002) 47–53.

23 In my eyes clearly the nurse lets Phaedra think of spells as a solution to her love sickness (therefore, Phaedra has no clue of the nurse’s plan to talk to Hippolytus), and Phaedra appears to be truly concerned about the possibility that the nurse would reveal her ‘secret’; there is, however, who does not believe the sincerity of the woman and considers her an hypocrite. Regarding this, the most extreme interpretation is that of Roisman (1999), (2000) 73–7: for this scholar, Euripides’ Phaedra is a manipulative woman rather than a virtuous one struggling hard to resist her passion; on the contrary Seneca’s Phaedra would be nobler and in possession of true decency and a genuine wish to be good: Roisman (2000) 74.

the nurse to keep silent as unconvincing. She actually—this is the common thought—wanted the nurse to take the initiative. Few note that Phaedra might have been misled by the promising expedients through which the nurse reassured her mistress about a harmless remedy: φίλτρα ἔρωτος (“love charms”) are indeed mentioned by the nurse (*Hippolytus* 508–10, cf. 478–9), which, in fact, causes Phaedra to ask what kind of remedy she has in mind, whether ointment or a potion (*Hippolytus* 516). Yet the action that, in a way, puts Phaedra on the wrong side, i.e., her false accusation, and the stereotypical portrait of the stepmother have all conspired to present this woman as open to reproach. Still the two goddesses that, in the end, set in motion the tragedy (Aphrodite and Artemis) claim that Phaedra is innocent (*Hippolytus* 26–7, 46–7, 1299–1307). But her innocence does not simply lie in her being a ‘puppet’ of the gods’ plan. Her struggle, her determination to save not only her own, but also her children’ and family’s reputation, and her refusal to impute her weakness to Theseus’ marital shortcomings, all of this testifies to her innocence. Her tragedy might revolve around both her recognition that knowing what is good is not the guarantee of acting accordingly (*Hippolytus* 377–83),²⁴ and her struggle for the triumph of virtue. And this triumph she eventually achieves at the highest price of killing herself. “She who was not able to be virtuous acted virtuously,” as even Hippolytus admits (l. 1034), for death means defeat of her unutterable feeling. Perhaps ironically, this unutterable feeling is far from being defeated by death. It is, in fact, what remains of Phaedra, what has decreed her immortality, according to the last words of Artemis: Phaedra’ love will not fade away (*Hippolytus* 1429–30).

And what of Hippolytus? A closer reading reveals a less sympathetic character than he appears at first glance. Indeed he speaks and acts with an arrogance that borders on *hybris* when it comes to gods and inevitably calls down the gods’ punishment.²⁵ Hippolytus’s death is, in the end, the outcome of his irreverence toward Aphrodite (*Hippolytus* 10–21, 43–6). The role played here by the gods might reveal Euripides’ criticism of traditional religion.²⁶ At the

24 Cf., e.g., *Hippolytus* 358–9; *Medea* 1078–80: in these passages it is possible—as some scholars highlight—to read the poet’s criticism of the Socratic assumption that virtue depends on knowledge (see Plato, *Protagoras* 352d). Regarding this, see Paduano (2000) 25–8; Mills (2002) 56–7.

25 For a concise, yet complete, analysis of this character, see, e.g., Mills (2002) 64–73; with reference to his Senecan counterpart, see Roisman (2000) 77–83.

26 Euripides’ criticism of the traditional religion, if not his atheism, was notorious, last but not least because of Aristophanes’ abuses (see, e.g., *Women at the Thesmophoria* 450–1, *Frogs* 890, 892–4). However, so far as we can ascertain, the poet only once acknowledges his atheism explicitly, and this happens in the lost tragedy *Bellerophon*: see Riedweg (1990).

same time, it might be the *medium* through which the poet shows how foolish rigidity and the inability to question one's own certainty may be a man's doom. These flaws make Hippolytus a genuine *tragic* hero, although the unfair, innocent death has been what has given him his tragic *status*.

Independently from where the balance tips, i.e., whether in favor of Phaedra or of Hippolytus, both figures seems to have caused some uneasiness, to the point that most of the subsequent adaptations, in one way or another, tend to sanitize the story. This translates into having Phaedra being just a fiancé of Theseus, or into emphasizing the philanderer aspect of Theseus, or into mitigating the extremism of Hippolytus and his misogyny, and so forth. On the other hand, the 'unspeakable' of this story has had its own influence by producing moralizing readings, which tend to condemn Phaedra.²⁷ With the rising of women's emancipation, feminist adaptations have also occurred.²⁸

Although a feminist label could only be applied anachronously to Phaedra's first Latin 'clone' by the hands of the Roman poet Ovid (1st century BC–1st century AD), certainly the Ovidian *Cressa* ("woman from Crete", *Heroides* ["Letters of Heroines"] 4. 2) turns the Euripidean Phaedra into a self-aware woman, strongly determined to give way openly to her love, and even to sustain its legitimacy.²⁹ Phaedra is the fictional author of the fourth Epistole in Ovid's *Heroides*. After trying, and failing, for three times to directly speak with Hippolytus of her feelings (4. 7), she eventually does not fail, on account of her modesty (*pudor*), to follow what love has commanded her. Subtly touching on a fundamental motif of the tragic model, i.e., the struggle between silence and speaking out, Ovid re-proposes it with a solution that fits his Phaedra and the ideological frame of reference that is consistent with his vision of life and contemporary Roman culture. What modesty, which must attend on love, prevents Ovid's Phaedra from saying, love commands her to write: the 'unspeakable' becomes 'writable', the attempted oral declaration—and the repressed one of the Greek model—becomes a written declaration. The reference to modesty is

27 On some detractors' reading, see Mills (2002) 95–7.

28 See below, e.g., pp. 466–8; 470–5.

29 Ovid reworks Hippolytus' story other two times, in *Fasti* 3. 263–74, 6.737–58 and in *Metamorphoses* 7. 497–546: on both occasions, however, he refers to a variant of the myth according to which Hippolytus did not actually die; he was saved by the love of Artemis and the healing skills of Asclepius. He was thus resurrected as Virbius and brought by the goddess to Latium. Here he was entrusted to the care of the Nymph Egeria and was worshipped as a minor god. On this version of the myth, cf. also Virgil, *Aeneid* 7. 761–80; Hyginus, *Fabula* 47.

rather a vestigial homage to the traditional figure, while not simply the declaration *per se* but also the content and purpose of that declaration are specific marks of Ovid's reception of the tragic model. It is, in fact, noteworthy that Phaedra is the only heroines in Ovid's *Heroides* who writes to a man with whom she is in love, but by whom she is not loved back. All the other heroines address their letter to their own lover who either is away or has abandoned them, both of which involve a man with whom there was, however, a real love relationship. This unparalleled situation and the ensuing seductive tone and purpose of the letter make Ovid's Phaedra stand out as transgressive.³⁰ One may object that in this way Ovid was perhaps just 'restoring' Euripides' lost first *Hippolytus* rather than appropriating and newly transforming the model. On the contrary, Ovid's reception of Phaedra's tragic story is built on a subtle rethinking of the scandalous feature, i.e., the incestuous-'adulterous' passion, such a rethinking that makes this Phaedra a 'progressive' woman, rather than simply a transgressive one. She, in fact, champions the unprejudiced social customs which Ovid's poetry often mirrors. By doing so she also helps promote an alternative ideology of the principate, along with the rejection of the *rustica mos maiorum* ("rustic/provincial, ancestral customs," cf. *Heroides* 4. 132).³¹ In her persuasive effort with the reticent Hippolytus, and, perhaps, polemicizing with the traditional looking down on her, Phaedra cautiously faces and circumvents the issue of the incest, both redeeming her Greek 'prototype' and reassuring her young stepson that the relationship would be harmless. They could both defend themselves, considering Theseus' shortcomings toward each of them: "*in magnis laesi rebus uterque sumus*" ("we have both been hurt in matters of great importance", 4. 114). Phaedra, in fact, has been left alone, with Piritoos, Theseus' friend, being preferred to her. Furthermore, her family had been 'destroyed' by Theseus (4. 111–6). Hippolytus has been cruelly deprived both of his mother, who was indeed killed by Theseus himself, and of his legitimate state as son, given that he was born out of wedlock (4. 117–20). More importantly, their kinship would be an obstacle only in name not in fact: *noverca* ("stepmother") and *privignus* (stepson) are just *nomina vana* ("empty names", 4. 130). Therefore, avoiding a relationship because of those 'names' would be an outdated scruple (*vetus pietas*, "old-fashioned morality", 4. 131) suited to the 'rustic time' of Saturnus.³²

30 For a different view of the transgressive nature of Ovid's Phaedra, see Bolton (2009) 278–80.

31 See Rosati (1985) 117–8; Susanetti (2005) 251–2. Most of my analysis draws upon Rosati's study.

32 Saturnus, the most ancient of Roman gods, symbolizes a primitive, archaic time whose customs and values are 'out of fashion' in the current kingdom of Jupiter.

In the present day Juppiter has established that lawful (*pium*, 4. 133) is whatever one likes, and Juno's marriage with him, her brother, has made everything 'proper and lawful' (*fas*, 4. 134). The divine example sanctions the legitimacy of a potentially incestuous relationship.³³ On the ground of that example, this 'progressive' Phaedra not only turns the 'unspeakable' into a 'writable', but she also converts the *nefas* ("illicit") into *fas* ("licit"), thus championing a new, updated morality. Relativism is the new morality, i.e., a view according to which ethical principles or standards of justification are relative to, and thus depend on, the culture, individuals and groups holding them. This 'appropriation' of Phaedra's character,³⁴ which is shaped in accordance with the poet's ideology and his time, is far different from the Greek model. Nonetheless, it is still the ultimate result of a careful remake of the original. Ovid, in fact, preserves some Euripidean *vestigia*. The Roman poet touches on the *pudor* and reputation issues, which reminds us of Phaedra's concerns for her εὐκλεία in the Greek play. Ovid also hints at the 'violence' and indomitable nature of her passion, which surfaces in the final plea for her love to be accepted and returned. Interestingly, Ovid also resumes the role and the characteristics of another important character in the Greek original, i.e., the nurse, and transposes them in Phaedra.³⁵ In Euripides, once the secret is revealed, the nurse does her best to persuade her mistress to assume a flexible state of mind, arguing that what she is experiencing is nothing 'extraordinary' and 'out of reckoning' (*Hippolytus* 437–8). The power of love is universal and invincible to the point that even the gods often yield to it (*Hippolytus* 439–59), which frees the woman from any culpability. Referring to the hard reality of life (e.g., Euripides, *Hippolytus* 252, 261–3), the nurse invites Phaedra to compromise by adopting, in some way, a relativistic behavior (e.g., *Hippolytus* 462–6) and thus yielding to her passion (e.g., *Hippolytus* 521). Euripides' nurse speaks finely of what is disgraceful (*Hippolytus* 505), i.e., makes graceful what is disgraceful, to

33 In *Metamorphoses*, too, namely in 9. 454–665 and 10. 311–508, we find two mythic women (respectively Byblis and Myrrha) who tend to justify their incestuous love by arguing for their legitimacy through the divine example (Byblis, in 9. 497–9) and the animal world (Myrrha, in 10. 321–35). In the latter that kind of union is not a *scelus/delictum*; it is nature that 'permits such a thing to happen', which would indirectly demonstrate that the taboo is just due to human convention. The new, progressive morality of relativism would be in agreement with the examples that all three of these mythic women (Byblis, Myrrha, and Phaedra) evoke in Ovid: see Rosati (1985) 121–4.

34 I use here the term 'appropriation' according to the definition given by Hardwick (2003) 9, i.e., as "taking an ancient image or text and using it to sanction subsequent ideas or practices (explicitly or implicitly)."

35 Rosati (1985) 123–8.

persuade her mistress, exactly as Ovid's Phaedra turns what is *nefas* ("illicit") into *fas* ("licit") to persuade Hippolytus. The same nurse in Euripides tries also to soften Hippolytus' devotion to wildness and Artemis, inviting the youth to a greater elasticity of thought and life-style. Similarly, Ovid's Phaedra makes such an attempt when inviting Hippolytus to alternate the *duritia* ("austerity/hardness") of Diana's worship with the *mollitia* ("indulging/softness") of honoring Venus (4. 85–102). The literary process to which Ovid subjects his Phaedra, by giving her also the traits of the nurse from her Greek prototype, goes even further if one considers that the Euripidean character of the nurse constitutes in turn the archetype of the so-called *lena*, i.e., the 'panderer' whose basic task was that of acting as a mediator in a prospective romantic relation. Ovid's Phaedra is thus a complex literary figure that comprises traits both of the Euripidean nurse and of the character born out of this Euripidean character. Ovid returns to Euripides to build his own Phaedra on the model of her nurse, too, involving, at the same time, what that model has become in the subsequent comic theatre and erotic literature. Shaped in this way, Ovid's Phaedra, who evidently resembles the elegiac mistress, also becomes the mouthpiece of a new morality: the morality that accords with the different social and ethical world into which the Roman poet positions this Phaedra, i.e., the social elite of his time.

Perhaps influenced by Ovid,³⁶ the roman author Seneca completely shifts the attention from Hippolytus to Phaedra in his tragedy entitled after the heroine, *Phaedra* (1st century AD). This is one of the most successful versions, and the first to be performed in the Renaissance, marking an epoch in European theatre.³⁷ Seneca makes explicit and sanctions what is already *in nuce* in Euripides, i.e., that the tragedy of Hippolytus is a tragedy about Phaedra. The effect of this shift is that the youth is overshadowed by the figure of Phaedra, and he seems to exist only to be the reluctant object of his stepmother's feeling.³⁸ In Seneca, Phaedra is transformed into a strong-willed and self-aware woman who goes further than Euripides' extant model and Ovid's 'antecedent', for she resolves to disclose her feeling and plead her own case in the presence of Hippolytus. In Euripides, the woman is so reticent to speak that she finally has the nurse herself 'say' what she is reluctant to disclose. In Ovid, the woman does speak of her feeling directly to Hippolytus but *in absentia*, by writing him a letter. In

36 The bibliography dealing with the relation between Ovid's *Heroides* 4 and Seneca's *Phaedra* is vast. Among several relevant works, one cannot avoid referring to Jakobi (1988).

37 See Mills (2002) 109–10.

38 See above, n. 3; also Mayer (2002) 54–5.

Seneca, through the use of allusion, hint and comparison, she openly, and with exceptional tact, finally speaks out in front of Hippolytus (ll. 609–71). In other words, from repression to expression, Phaedra's character evolves through the how she manages her passion (whether to disclose it or not), a passion that social conventions also condemn as evil. In Euripides, disclosing that passion, or letting someone else disclose it, was a crucial matter. In Seneca, however, it might merely reflect real situations occurring in the contemporary high society, where it was not infrequent that 'noble women' would take the erotic initiative with men.³⁹ Seneca's reception of this critical feature of the Greek original seems thus to result in modernizing the story by updating it. On the other hand, while in Euripides the potential incestuous nature of the passion is what contributes to make it shameful to Phaedra's eyes in particular, in Seneca it seems to end up being a matter of crucial relevance for Hippolytus in particular, rather than for Phaedra.⁴⁰ Perhaps in reaction to Ovid's *nomina vana* ("empty names"), Seneca makes kinship one of the nodal points of his drama.⁴¹ The family relations are the trigger of the tragic events. Rather than Hippolytus' 'vow' to chastity, what makes Phaedra's passion impossible is the fact that her beloved is the son of her husband, and this activates the plot.⁴² Since the *incipit* of Phaedra's disclosure speech with her refusal to be called *mater* ("mother," l. 609), Seneca insists on a terminology centering on kinship.⁴³ And the crucial importance of that kinship is testified to by the reaction of Hippolytus to Phaedra's propositioning: *placui novercae* ("I stirred my stepmother to love," l. 684). It is symptomatic of Seneca's reception of the family theme that, while in Euripides Hippolytus' reaction more broadly involves the female gender (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 616–50), taking 'Phaedra's case' as an occasion for his tirade, in Seneca, on the contrary, the tirade targets Phaedra directly and specifically by referring to her, to Hippolytus himself, and to the whole situation, using a lexicon evoking family relations (Seneca, *Phaedra* 680–97). To Seneca's Hippolytus what is unacceptable is not that the 'everlasting-hated' being, i.e., a woman (ll. 566–8), 'has polluted' his *rigor* ("austerity/chastity," l. 686). It is the identity of that specific woman that makes it all unacceptable, monstrous, and criminal. She is his *noverca* ("stepmother"). This makes her feelings even more abominable than those of her mother Pasiphae for the bull. It also makes Phaedra herself even more reproachful than the

39 See Mayer (2002) 26.

40 Regarding this, see also Mayer (2002) 26, 39–40.

41 About the importance of kinship in Seneca's play, see Petrone (2008).

42 Petrone (2008) 239–40.

43 Petrone (2008) 241.

Colchide noverca of his father Theseus, i.e., Medea (l. 697).⁴⁴ To Hippolytus' eyes Phaedra's *impudicitia* ("impurity/shamelessness") is such a sin that it would be more than right to punish her with death (ll. 707–10). And he himself would deserve to die as being indirectly part of that *culpa* ("guilt"), since 'placui[t] novercae' (ll. 683–4). As Hippolytus' reaction exploits the family tie with its incestuous overtone, so does Phaedra's disclosure, by involving her sister's previous relationship with Theseus, who is now her husband (ll. 661–7). This would already give her marriage a hint of incest.⁴⁵ That the potential incest is not a concern to Phaedra is shown by the fact that she does not hesitate to reveal her feelings by playing on words that imply an interchanging of identity between herself and her sister on the one hand, and between Hippolytus-son and Theseus-father, who is (and has been) also partner of the two sisters, on the other hand. More than in the Greek original, in Seneca Phaedra is a woman in love. Euripides' Phaedra cannot live *with* her feeling for Hippolytus and the related sense of guilt, concerned as she is with the 'good reputation' issue. Seneca's Phaedra cannot live *without* Hippolytus,⁴⁶ no matter—one would add—that he is her stepson.⁴⁷ This is not to say that like in Ovid, in Seneca, too, Phaedra sees the incestuous relationship as legitimate. Seneca's Phaedra, we said, is a clear-sighted and self-aware woman who, in fact,

44 The mention of Medea might be suggested by the parallel that Hippolytus, as a son dealing with a 'troublemaker' stepmother, may see with his father's experience (Theseus) with his own more-than-just-troublemaker stepmother (exactly Medea). It is however striking the fact that Medea is here remembered as *noverca*, she who is rather best-known for the infanticide. This fact might be a further evidence of the stereotypical bad connotation that the stepmother figure held in ancient culture (see also below, n. 55).

45 This is what the French anthropologist Heritier (1994) called *inceste du second type* or *incest du Phedre type* ("incest of second type," "Phaedra-incest type"). On the incest see also above, n. 8.

46 And, perhaps later, she cannot also live with the guilty feeling of having provoked the death of an innocent.

47 And no matter that she is married. Regarding this, there is a 'mitigating' motif in Seneca, and, before him, perhaps in Sophocles: see Casanova (2004) 9. Phaedra believes that she is a widow (Seneca, *Phaedra* 623), which would give her the right to re-marry. Furthermore, she would be a widow queen, and, as such, she has a political obligation to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of her community by providing a leader: see Casanova (2004) 9; Petrone (2008) 241. *Muliebre est non regna tutari urbium* ("It is not a woman's task to watch over the kingdom of towns.")—Phaedra says, in fact, to Hippolytus in the 'preamble' of her declaration (l. 619). Political power for Phaedra might be both a weapon to appeal to Hippolytus' possible ambition, and a concern, since she is the queen that should 'watch over the kingdom'.

does recognize that she is no more *innocens* ("innocent," l. 668),⁴⁸ but, as she confesses, *mei non sum potens* ("I am not mistress of myself," l. 699). The tragedy of Seneca's Phaedra lies foremost in her inner conflict between *furor* (passion/emotion) and *ratio/animus* (reason/rational mind).⁴⁹ Her soul becomes the battlefield of a civil war between two internal 'wills': *Vos testor omnes, caelites, hoc quod volo me nolle* ("I call you all, gods, to witness that I do not wish what I wish," l. 604).⁵⁰ The will of her *furor* overwhelms the will of her *ratio*; her *animus* is *sciens* ("aware/has full knowledge"), yet she is powerless: *furor regnat* ("passion dominates") as she confesses to her nurse (ll. 177–88).⁵¹ Driven by that *furor* she who has always been "without stain, pure and innocent" now changes herself for Hippolytus only (ll. 668–9). That is to say, she lets her passion 'stain' her. This self-awareness and the process of internalization are among the innovations characterizing Seneca's version, along with the woman propositioning, pushed, as she is, by her passion. Although overwhelming, her *furor* does not completely win at the very end. Indeed Phaedra, resuming her responsibilities and restoring her *animus*, will go on to confess to Theseus the lies and the crime she *demens* ("crazed with passion," 1192) has conceived. This confession constitutes another significant innovation in Seneca's adaptation. And, as a true stoic heroine, with the sword by which she incriminated Hippolytus (l. 896), Phaedra frees herself at once from life and from crime (ll. 1177–8).⁵² *Iustus* ("just," l. 1197) is the sword through which she punishes and frees herself, thus dying as Hippolytus had threatened her (ll. 706–9). Through that lethal sword, ultimately, not simply does she find the only possible solace of evil love, i.e., death (l. 1188), but she finds that solace exactly as she had wished in front of Hippolytus' threat (ll. 711–2). She also achieves the best redemption of her damaged *pudor* (l. 1189). In Euripides, Phaedra's suicide aims exclusively at saving her own reputation and at securing the wellbeing of her children. In Seneca it means freedom from *furor*, redemption of *pudor*, just punishment and, last but not least, a way to join the beloved. *Non licuit animos iungere, at certe licet iunxisse fata* ("it was not licit to be joined in life, but surely

48 On the intricate feeling of love, guilt and innocence, see Biondi (2008).

49 The internalization of Phaedra's anguished struggle, i.e., her 'intra-personal' conflict, is one of the most acknowledged novelties of Seneca's portrayal: Mayer (2002) 46.

50 *Me nolle* appeared restored in the manuscripts; some editors have indeed expunged it. I follow the edition of O. Zwierlein, Oxford 1986, who keeps it as authentic.

51 On the pair *furor-ratio*, which marks the interior struggle of Phaedra, see Giancotti (1985); Mayer (2002) 42–5.

52 On Seneca and suicide within the stoic philosophical perspective, see Eckert 1951; on Phaedra's choice of suicide and the meaning behind the manner of its execution in Seneca, see Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2003).

it is licit to be joined in death," 1183–4) says Phaedra at the point of death. Differently than in Euripides, in Seneca Phaedra's suicide not only occurs after the return of Theseus and the death of Hippolytus, but it also occurs on the stage, which constitutes a "characteristically Senecan piece of action (ll. 1197–8)."⁵³ And a characteristically Senecan touch, I would add, is also the messenger's gruesome description of the horrible death of Hippolytus (ll. 1000–14), which, like in Euripides, occurs upon Theseus' curse and request to Neptune to have his son killed (ll. 941–58). Not only is the messenger's report full of macabre details, but the reference both to the necessity to piece Hippolytus' body together again and to the impossibility of such a thing, for not all the parts are to hand, contributes to the 'horror' of the end of the youth, who cannot even be granted a complete burial. It must be partial, and the rest of Hippolytus' remains are to be sought (ll. 1278–9). These horrific details certainly emphasize the unfairness of Hippolytus' death by way of contrast with his innocence. Perhaps not by chance, the youth's horrific death, as vividly described in Seneca, has survived in the imagination of many artists, as we shall see.

Although Seneca's version has promoted a tendency towards the psychologization of the story, in particular through his representation of the devastating inner conflict of Phaedra, in Late Antiquity the complexity of the mythical figures involved, and of their drama, has been reduced to a single characteristic. Phaedra comes to personify just a *noverca*, such an identity that, as seen, has its own weight in Seneca: namely, she becomes one of the best examples of the *saeva noverca* ("cruel stepmother").⁵⁴ Hippolytus comes to represent the young, naïve victim of female wiles.⁵⁵ The motif of a stepmother falling in love with, and trying to seduce, her stepson has been variously re-elaborated in the Hellenistic and Latin novel or romance, from the Greek writer Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* 1. 9–10 (ca. 3rd century AD) to the Latin-language prose author Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 10. 2–12 (ca. 2nd century AD).⁵⁶ In both cases the plot and behavioral patterns of the characters evidently recall Euripides' lost

53 Mayer (2002) 31–2.

54 This figure, and not least Phaedra as being a *saeva noverca*, becomes, in fact, a recurrent *topos* in the rhetorical declamations (*Controversiae*) of the Roman rhetorician and writer Seneca the Elder (1st century BC–1st century AD): see Casamento (1999) 103–24.

55 As it is typical to the 'Potiphar-wife' archetype, on which see above, n. 10. For the several occurrences of this motif in ancient Greek culture, see Scarsella (1985) 213–4; for its occurrence in particular in Euripides' plays, see Cavan (1998).

56 As for Phaedra in Apuleius, see Mattiacci (2004) 131–56; Pociña (2008) 269–86. A good analysis of the Phaedra figure in Heliodorus is in Rocca (1976).

Hippolytus and Seneca's *Phaedra*, for the woman is the one that openly makes amorous advances to the youth. In these romance versions the stepmother's lack of self-restraint is stressed, which has undoubtedly contributed to the negative, sinful conception that is typically ascribed to *Phaedra*. On the other hand, due to the exemplification and the allegorization, often with a moralizing aim, that characterize the reception of classical myth in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, *Hippolytus* is almost seen as a virtuous martyr. This is the case with a peculiar adaptation of his story within the Christian culture of Late Antiquity.⁵⁷ Perhaps under the suggestion of the name itself (*Hippolytus*)⁵⁸ and of some similarities between the tragic end of the mythic character and the tragic end of the historical personage *Hippolytus*, the Christian poet Prudentius (4th century AD) turned to Seneca's *Phaedra* when he composed the Hymn 11 of his *Peristephanon liber* ("Crowns of Martyrdom"), a poetic collection devoted to some conspicuous Christian martyrs.⁵⁹ *Passio Hippolyti beatissimi martyris* ("The Passion of Hippolytus, very blessed martyr") is the theme of the Hymn 11, which celebrates the feast-day of the martyrdom of the Roman presbyter *Hippolytus*. This Christian homonym of the mythic figure was actually schismatic until the very moment of his death, when he converted to the orthodox Christianity.⁶⁰ While telling of his visit to the catacombs, stopping at the tomb of *Hippolytus* (*Peristephanon* 11. 1–24), Prudentius narrates his life, starting from the moment in which the pagans arrested him. He thus recounts the conversion of *Hippolytus*, which occurred during the walk to the judge (11. 25–86) who condemned him with the caustic sentence, *Ergo sit Hippolytus . . . / intreatque feris dilaceratus equis* ("Thus let him be Hippolytus . . . / may he die torn apart by wild horses," 11. 87–8). Since *Hippolytus* had first followed and taught doctrines not approved by the church, thus 'tearing' the unity of the religion, this form of death was found peculiarly appropriate. But, it is also

57 Ironically, beyond Late Antiquity the Christian reception of the story works in a similar way with reference to *Hippolytus*' antagonist, i.e., *Phaedra*, who, indeed, becomes a martyr; this is the case of de Unamuno *Phaedra*: see below, pp. 463–4.

58 See Malamud (1989) 82.

59 For a detailed account of this hymn and its connection with *Hippolytus-Phaedra* story, see Malamud (1989) 79–113; Gasti (1993); Mayer (2002) 76–7; Bertini (2008). My analysis is indebted to all these studies.

60 According to Frazer (1911) 1: 21, this Roman *Hippolytus*—who died in a day that, in the Roman calendar, was dedicated to the goddess *Diana*, i.e. August 13th.—was indeed a 'reincarnation' of the mythical Greek, and pagan, *Hippolytus*: after dying twice as pagan, has been resurrected as Christian saint. Frazer' theory evidently leans on the version according to which the Greek *Hippolytus* was resurrected as *Virbius* and brought in *Latium* (see above, n. 29).

possible that the *calembour* implied in the judge's verdict is an intentionally apparent reference to the way of death of the mythic Hippolytus both in Euripides and in Seneca. However, the grisly details of the death, as described by Prudentius, echo the messenger's speech and final scene of Seneca's play rather than of Euripides'. The presbyter Hippolytus was bound to a pair of wild horses which, lashed to a fury, were set free to run, horribly quartering the man's body. And, as it happens in Seneca, so in Prudentius' poem the followers of Hippolytus come to recover and bring together the shattered pieces, but with a significant difference. The Christians were able to recover all the limbs, and, additionally, they even collect the martyr's blood from sand and rocks with sponges, well aware of the importance granted to a martyr's body as relic. This different *finale* might be symptomatic of a critique of Seneca and constitutes a peculiar feature of Prudentius's reception in terms of 'polemic *aemulatio*' ("imitation").⁶¹ Besides the manner of death and the allusive potential of the name, his innocence and, thus, his unfair death equate this Hippolytus to the mythical one, promoting the image of innocent victim, which will long survive. In Prudentius' adaptation nothing remains of the radicalism and hints of arrogance characterizing the classical Hippolytus.⁶²

The youth, perhaps more than his stepmother, continues to appear as an exemplary figure, namely as a rigorous paradigm and embodiment of virtue, chastity and innocence in various medieval narrative poems. In his *Divina Commedia*, for instance, referencing the unfortunate case of the innocent Hippolytus banished because of his perfidious stepmother, the Italian poet Dante (13th–14th century) indirectly comments on his own biographic, unfair banishment: "As forth from Athens went Hippolytus, / by reason of his stepmother false and cruel, / so you from Florence must perforce depart," this prophesies to Dante his ancestor Cacciaguida (*Paradise*, 17. 43–45).

In the Early Modern Age, the story begins to be revisited frequently with a clear shift of attention to Phaedra. Seneca's *Phaedra* rather than Euripides'

61 Bertini (2008) 293–4.

62 An interesting non-allegorical Christian adaptation of the myth is to be found in the play *Crispus* (first performed in 1597) by the Roman Jesuit Bernardino Stefonio. He historicized the myth replacing Theseus with the emperor Constantine. His son Crispus is the counterpart of Hippolytus, while Fausta, wife of Constantine and stepmother to Crispus, is the counterpart of Phaedra: see Grosse (2010) 525–6. This tragedy later inspired the Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti, *Fausta e Crispo, ossia L'Ippolito redivivo: melodramma tragico in due atti* ("Fausta and Crispus, that is, Hippolytus, the holdover. A two-Acts tragic melodramma," libretto by D. Gilardoni, first performed in 1832 at the Theater San Carlo, Naples – Italy). About this opera by Donizetti, see Ashbrook (1987) 305; Bagnoli (1993) 132. On the reception of this tragedy in music and opera, see, also, below, pp. 481–4.

Hippolytus served as the model for the composition of adaptations of this tragedy.⁶³ Although the Italians were the first to make accessible both Euripides' and Seneca's play in a modern language (respectively in 1504, and 1488), Phaedra's story finds her *terre d'élection* (i.e., "chosen land" for her revival) in France. No place in Europe showed as much interest in this woman and her stepson as France did, to the point that her story became 'French territory'. Adapting the story to the 'taste' of the time, French writers introduced some refinements in their characterizations.⁶⁴ Hippolytus's chastity is almost wiped out, since by the 17th century it seemed unnatural, if not ridiculous. The youth rather resembles a gentleman à la mode. Phaedra's passion is, in a way, sanitized, i.e., deprived of its incestuous and adulterous overtone, for she only appears as engaged to Theseus, not yet his wife. The French playwright Gabriel Gilbert first introduced this innovation in his *Hippolyte ou le garçon insensible* ("Hippolytus, or The Heartless Young Man," 1647), also adding to the base nature of Theseus, i.e., his being unfaithful and neglectful toward Phaedra. This trait, indeed, already shines through the Greek and, above all, the Latin models.⁶⁵ The removal both of Hippolytus' rigor, chastity and arrogance, and of the incestuous nuance of Phaedra's feeling for the youth is a trait that often occurs in the adaptations produced in the second half of the 17th century. In some of them, such as Mathieu Bidar's *Hippolyte* ("Hippolytus," 1675) and Jérôme Pradon's *Phèdre et Hippolyte*, ("Phaedra and Hippolytus," 1677), Hippolytus' metamorphosis from an extreme misogynist into a man fit for *galanterie* ("chivalry") is complete, for he appears attracted to a princess who, replacing Artemis and the wild life, comes to be a concrete rival of Phaedra.

It is, however, with Jean Racine, the greatest French playwright to revisit this tragic story, that Phaedra has achieved an iconic status. Racine's *Phèdre* (1677) is generally regarded as this author's masterpiece.⁶⁶ Despite the author's pro-

63 Regarding this, see Mayer (2002) 78–9; Mills (2002) 114–5.

64 The following analysis of characterizations, and the observations about differences and similarities among Euripides, Seneca and the French authors, are based on Mayer (2002) 79–83; Mills (2002) 115–7; Susanetti (2005) 254–7. With reference to Racine, see also Osho (1970); Dalla Valle (1985); López (2008).

65 On Gilbert's adaptation, see Wood (1996) 25–7; Mills (2002) 115. It should be noted that the deterioration of Theseus' portrait with the purpose of rendering more acceptable and sympathetic the case of Phaedra can already be found in Matteo Bandello's (1554–1573) *Novelle* 37. Here the Italian author explicitly refers to Phaedra while telling the story of Niccolò d'Este, who condemned to execution his wife and son upon discovering their adulterous relationship.

66 It should be remembered that Racine's composition and performance were concomitant (and 'rival') to that of Pradon. There are some considerable differences between the two, although Racine, too, introduced a character named Aricie, the woman with whom his

fessed debt to Euripides in his preface (*Préface to Phèdre*), Racine's play owes a considerable debt to Seneca's *Phaedra*. Racine's innovations are all the product of an adaptation of the model both to the customs of his times and *bienséances* ("propriety/decorum") of king Louis XIV court, and to his own Jansenist mentality.⁶⁷ There is, in fact, an overall tendency to soften the characters and to remove all extremely debasing and negative traits in order better to fit the French sense of decorum. The false accusation of rape, for instance, is left to the nurse Oenone, given that a princess or queen, such as Phaedra, could not be the author of such a base deed. Seneca's character of the nurse has influenced Racine in adapting the course of events in this way, making it appropriate for his contemporary taste. Innovatively, however, Racine attenuates the content of the accusation, with the prince being accused of 'having had the intention' to violate his stepmother, not of having actually perpetrated the act. As for the character of Hippolytus, he is 're-made' to a human measure. He is not the inflexibly chaste and virtuous youth of Euripides and Seneca; on the contrary, he is a gentleman who has fallen in love with the maiden Aricie. The new 'human dimension' of Hippolytus is not confined to this 'weakness'. His love, too, is in a way guilty, for the maiden is the daughter and sister of enemies of Theseus. With Phaedra, too, this Hippolytus is gentler than his Greek and Latin model. In the scene of the declaration, far from threatening Phaedra with his sword, he seems paralyzed, too shocked to react, and certainly unable to draw his sword, to the point that Phaedra has to do it herself! As for Phaedra, who, to Racine's eyes, is neither completely guilty nor completely innocent, her character too is softened and set in a more moral light. She, in fact, reveals her feeling to Hippolytus only when she receives the (false) news that Theseus was dead. She would have not dared unleash her passion, otherwise. But once she does, as Seneca's Phaedra, she knows no restraint. Like Seneca's Phaedra, she shows self-awareness, in that she knows the monstrosity of her feeling and defines herself a horrible monster. Like in Seneca (*Phaedra* 617–21),⁶⁸ in Racine, too, although with some more emphasis, the theme of the power, i.e., the delicate problem of the royal succession—a theme that would be familiar to the aristocratic audience of Racine—appears alongside the propositioning of Phaedra. The woman tries to appeal to Hippolytus' political ambition with the prospective of inheriting Theseus' throne at the expense of

new Hippolytus is in love (on Aricie, see below pp. 460–1; 482). For a concise comparative analysis between Racine's and Pradon's play, see Mills (2002) 116–8.

67 Beside the bibliography mentioned above (n. 64), for a further discussion of Racine's play, see Tobin (1971) and Edward/Jondorf (1994) 61–9.

68 About the presence of the political theme in Seneca, and its 'mitigating' effect, see above, n. 47.

her own legitimate children and heirs (Act 3, 1). Conversely, Hippolytus, too, for the sake of love, would be ready to offer the 'throne' to his beloved, Aricie (Act 5, 1). Very skillfully Racine has interlaced the political theme with the contrasting 'guilty' loves in which the characters are involved.⁶⁹ The end of the tragedy appears to be indebted to Seneca as well. Differently from Euripides, Seneca does not have Theseus reconciled with Hippolytus. There is no final dialogue between the two, and we are left with a void: the ruin of a family. This conclusion likely appealed to Racine's pessimistic vein, which his Jansenism also nourished. Central to his Jansenism was also the concept of the remoteness of the gods, which is implied in Seneca's marginalization and omission of them. Racine thus seems to have built on Seneca not only as a dramatic artist, but also in terms of religious sensibility. In Racine Phaedra is not the only one who commits suicide. Her nurse, who is accused by her mistress to have provoked all things and is cast away, threw herself from a cliff. This final double suicide is in a way softened, too, with the scene of Theseus' reconciliation with the 'enemy' Aricie, whom he adopts as her daughter.

In the 18th and 19th centuries the tragedy of Hippolytus and Phaedra was rather out of favor. The first notable echo occurs in the second half of the 19th century, more precisely in 1866 with the dramatic poem *Phaedra* by the English poet Algernon Swinburne. It marks the beginning of a series of the myth's *end-of-the-century*-revivals in the spirit of sexual obsession and pathology. Swinburne's poem consists of a single dialogic scene where Phaedra encourages Hippolytus to kill her with his sword. It thus re-elaborates, and brings to the extreme, two interconnected motifs present in Seneca and Racine: (1) the direct confrontation between Phaedra and Hippolytus; and (2) Phaedra's prospect of death at the hands of her beloved. Upon Hippolytus' refusal and flight, Phaedra is left to her own thoughts. Her characterization owes much to Seneca. Like the Senecan one, this Phaedra is aware of her family's 'curse', i.e., of the transgressive passions characterizing the female line of her kinship (cf., e.g. Seneca, *Phaedra* 680–97). At the same time, Swinburne's Phaedra is also in debt to some specifically modern obsessions. This Phaedra has no sense of shame and, in her masochistic desire for self-annihilation, death appears to her as the fulfillment of love.⁷⁰

Swinburne's Phaedra might have had some influence upon the Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, who produced a *Fedra* in 1909. This was one of the very

69 The hindered love of Hippolytus and Aricie is one of the main motifs in the music/lyric version of Jean Philippe Rameau (on which, see below, p. 482).

70 On Swinburne's *Phaedra*, see Mayer (2002) 83; for a more detailed analysis, see Gaspar (2008).

first adaptations of the theme that were produced at the dawn of the 20th century. Written in explicit reaction to Racine's play, whose heroine, according to D'Annunzio's complaint, did not have "a drop of pagan blood" in her veins,⁷¹ the Italian poet turns Phaedra into a *belle dame sans merci* ("a beautiful lady without mercy"). She appears as an unleashed bacchant, aggressively passionate and, at times, violent superwoman who despises all gods except *Thanatos* ("Death"). Death is the only god she is able to recognize and honor. To this Phaedra's eyes the power of love, fatal and disastrous as it is, resembles the power of Death. She sees her own death not as expiation for the injustice that she has committed against Hippolytus, but as a union with her beloved, a perpetuation in death of her love for Hippolytus⁷²—almost in the same spirit as that of the final dramatic *aria* (the *Liebestod*, "love-death") of Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*.⁷³ Behind D'Annunzio's last scene, I would be tempted to hear the Senecan Phaedra's laconic final words, *non licuit animos iungere, at certe licet iunxisse fata* (1183–4).⁷⁴ D'Annunzio's Phaedra, almost out of sacrilege, triumphs at the end. She dies unrepentantly celebrating her passion and claiming victory over Aphrodite. Almost putting herself in competition with the goddess, Phaedra claims Hippolytus as her own, for she liberates the youth from Aphrodite's domain. Love can continue in death and after death, but Aphrodite has no more power there; she does not preside over death. Choosing to die to join Hippolytus, D'Annunzio's Phaedra wins and, in doing so, seals forever her memory: "è mio/ là dove tu [sc. Aphrodite] non regni. Io vinco . . . / Fedra indimenticabile," ("[he] is mine / there where you [sc. Aphrodite] do not reign. I win . . . / I, unforgettable Phaedra," D'Annunzio, *Fedra* 3147–8).

In reaction to D'Annunzio's play, marking a return to Euripides and Racine, the Spanish playwright Miguel de Unamuno proposes his version of the tragedy in 1910 (*Fedra*), refashioning the story in a Christian guise. Phaedra becomes a 'sacred martyr'.⁷⁵ She redeems herself through a letter, which this time contains the real truth (a key word in this re-elaboration). Furthermore, she allows full reconciliation between father and son, and thus avoids the

71 I translated above what D'Annunzio himself said of Racine's play in an interview released the day before the *premiere* of his Phaedra: see Guglielmetti (1985) 33. The bibliography on D'Annunzio's reworking of the Greek story of Hippolytus and Phaedra is vast. In addition to Guglielmetti, among the more useful contributions, see Pavan 1980; Citti/Neri (2001) 93–6; Susanetti (2005) 260–2; De Martino (2008).

72 See Citti/Neri (2001) 95 and n. 79.

73 Grosse (2010) 530.

74 For the translation, see above, pp. 456–7.

75 See, e.g., Citti/Neri (2001) 97 and n. 89; also, Rubino (2008) 28 and n. 3.

death of an innocent. This time, the fate, which is often summoned, spares Hippolytus. The Christian hope for redemption is what finally prevails, which accords with Unamuno's philosophy.⁷⁶ A noteworthy innovation pertains to the figure of Theseus, 're-baptized' as Pedro. He is not the base, neglectful man ready to curse to death his son, as he is mostly portrayed in the classical tradition of the story. On the contrary, he appears to be aware of his own flaws and is concerned with correcting himself and his decisions for the sake of the family's wellbeing. Theseus is, in a way, a truly tragic character: by irony, he himself is the 'author' of the tragedy and its 'spectator'. Pedro, in fact, gives Phaedra the 'excuse' to speak with Hippolytus to persuade him to think of getting married. On this occasion, indeed, Phaedra reveals her feelings, thus activating the tragic outcome.

Still in the first decades of the 20th century, the myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus inspired the American playwright Eugene O'Neill (1888–1953), who, in 1924, wrote a play in three acts with the title *Desire under the Elms*.⁷⁷ Set on an 1850-New England farm, it portrays a family drama involving the usual trio (a father, a son/stepson, and a stepmother) with an addition: an innocent child, the recipient of a curse launched by the counterpart of Hippolytus rather than by Theseus'. Significant changes also occur in the characterization of the counterpart of Phaedra. The whole family is not a royal one; it is a family of farmers. Everything gravitates around the farm, the possession of the property, and the inheritance of that property. These all are issues that can be seen—I think—as an adapted counterpart of the political theme that surfaces, as seen, in Seneca's and, subsequently, in Racine's version.⁷⁸ The three main characters are: Ephraim Cabot, who takes over the role of Theseus; Eben Cabot, Hippolytus' counterpart—he is the son of Ephraim and his first wife (who was, actually, the owner of the farm); and Abbie, the second wife of Ephraim, stepmother to Eben, thus Phaedra's counterpart. Like Theseus, Ephraim is an 'absent' father and husband, only devoted to his own business which, in this case, is the farm. Eben hates his father, whom he thinks is responsible for the death of his own mother. Eben thinks that the farm is his birthright; he thus manages to get rid of his two stepbrothers. One might say that the 'obsession' for the farm parallels the 'obsession' for horses and hunting of the mythical counterpart. Differently from the original Phaedra, Abbie is particularly interested in her husband's property, but she soon loses herself in thoughts of Eben. One night,

76 On de Unamuno see, in particular, Morenilla (2008) 435–46.

77 Regarding this adaptation, see Del Arbol/Vázquez (2008); Zakri (2011–2012). It was later converted in a movie in 1958, directed by Delbert Mann: Rubino (2008) 71–2 and n. 3.

78 See above, pp. 453–7 (for Seneca), and pp. 460–2 (for Racine).

taking advantage of the absence of her husband, she declares her love to Eben. At first confused, Eben eventually yields to her for revenge against his father. Abbie herself, however, starts everything as a plot to secure the farm for herself. After a while, Abbie appears to bear a child, who is from Eben, but she makes Ephraim believe that the child is his. Once Ephraim announces to Eben that he will not inherit the farm, Eben assaults his father and a fight originates. Abbie confesses to Eben that at first she has indeed conspired against him, but then she has discovered she really loves him. Eben curses her and their son, wishing he was never born. In despair Abbie kills their child to prove her true love for Eben. With the new heir dead, Eben would thus not be deprived of his farm. After confessing the murder to Eben, Eben summons the sheriff to denounce the woman. Meanwhile Abbie reveals Ephraim the full truth, and he tries to strangle her. Eben, back from the sheriff, tells Abbie that, while he was denouncing her, he actually realized that he, too, truly loves her. He thus proposes to run away. Abbie insists she must pay for her faults. Once the sheriff arrives, Eben wants to share the responsibility for the killing of the child. Both are taken away to prison, while Ephraim remains alone and keeps working on his farm. Only at the end does O'Neill's Phaedra seem to be concerned with remorse, when she becomes aware of her real feelings. Previously, in contrast with the ancient Phaedra, her actions have not been driven by true feelings, but rather by her longing for a financial stability at the expense of her husband. As for O'Neill's Hippolytus, he is not a misogynist. He rather seems to be an opportunist; he uses his stepmother as a 'weapon' against the father. Only at the end does he, too, become aware of his true feelings. Upon this realization, he contrasts his base act of cursing an innocent child with accepting his share of responsibility for the cruel end of that child. Ephraim, like the 'traditional' Theseus, remains a base, self-centered person, and worse than Theseus, he does not express any sense of remorse. The final scene of forgiveness and reconciliation, which in the Greek model occurs between the father and the son, seems here to be taken over by the last interactions between the stepmother and the stepson. But still an innocent victim remains: the dead child.

Interestingly this play created controversies and violent reactions when it opened on Broadway in 1924. It outraged an attorney of New York District to the point that he tried to censure it by creating a citizen jury to evaluate the morality of that production. To me it almost recalls what happened at the 'premiere' of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, i.e., his first, and lost, version, although, as mentioned above, it was seen as outrageous and indecent for a different reason. But while Euripides had to re-write the play, O'Neil did not. The jury did not find it obscene. The play continued, however, to create controversy. It was banned in Boston until 1940, and in 1925 in Los Angeles the entire cast was arrested and tried in court for performing an obscene play.

If the rewriting of Phaedra's and Hippolytus tragic story has been a male monopoly for centuries up to the *incipit* of the 20th century,⁷⁹ from that point and beyond, for this tragedy in particular, it seems possible to track a consistent sequence of re-elaborations by 'female hands'.⁸⁰ In these feminist re-elaborations it seems possible to identify two general pathways either with Phaedra as the victim of social conventions and even of persecutions, or with Phaedra as the victorious master of her own fate. Nonetheless, each rewriting inevitably presents idiosyncrasies that might be due to the specific biographic events of the authors or to their socio-historical context.

It is safe to say that the sequence of rewritings of the Phaedra and Hippolytus tragedy by 'female hands' starts with the Russian writer Marina Tsvetaeva.⁸¹ Although it was heavily criticized and not appreciated at all by many of her contemporary critics, the *Fedra* of Tsvetaeva presents several suggestive innovations that reflect her own peculiar reading of the story. Hers is a reading probably shaped by some biographic events,⁸² but certainly aimed at cleansing *Phaedra* from any stains, presenting her just as she was. Whether by Aphrodite's will or not, she was a woman in love. Written in 1927 and published in 1928, it was conceived as the second 'act' of a trilogy dedicated to Theseus and his loves. Of this trilogy, Tsvetaeva wrote the first portion, *Ariadne*. The author, however, did not complete the trilogy with the intended third 'act', *Helen*. Tsvetaeva re-interpreted the story in light of the inextricable bond of love and fate on account of which one who is in love cannot be guilty. Probably taking inspiration from her own passion for a younger man, while she was in exile and her husband was away, according to her own notes she wanted to claim the innocence of Phaedra poetically, by imaging "a Phaedra . . . pure from crime, . . . a young woman madly in love, and deeply clear."⁸³ This Phaedra, in fact, does not accuse Hippolytus out of fear for her reputation (as in Euripides), or for jealousy (as in Racine, where the woman decided to accuse Hippolytus when she realized his love for Aricie), or in a fit of furious, blind passion (as in the 'decadent' D'Annunzio). Interestingly, in this version, too, there is a letter

79 A synthetic overview is also in Rubino (2008) 17–34.

80 I borrowed this expression from the subtitle of Rubino's book, i.e., *Per mano femminile* (2008).

81 It must be noted that the last name of this author can be also spelled as Cvetaeva as well. On this re-elaboration see, in particular, Bazzarelli (1987); Susanetti (2005) 262–4; Rubino, (2008) 35–56; Volpe Cacciatore (2012).

82 Rubino (2008) 37.

83 Above is my English translation of the passage quoted in Italian in Rubino (2008), who in turn translated from a Russian edition of the writer's notes: see Rubino (2008) 38 and n. 11.

written by Phaedra. But, by way of a witty reverse of the original, this letter does not implicate Hippolytus; on the contrary, it will prove his innocence.⁸⁴ It is the letter that Phaedra sent to Hippolytus when she decided to reveal to him her feelings. Her first approach was, in fact, through a letter, a letter that the insensitive Hippolytus did not want even to read. After this first rejection, Phaedra attempted a direct confrontation just to obtain the same result. In Tsvetaeva it is the nurse who accused Hippolytus, without any suggestion from Phaedra and only after the death of her mistress. And it is only the visceral affection of the nurse toward her mistress that leads her to such an accusation, just as a typical Russian *njanja* ("nanny") would have done. As hinted at, Tsvetaeva's Phaedra does commit suicide, but not out of a sense of guilt; what is more, the incest issue does not exist for her. She kills herself because her love is not returned. The pain of the refusal and the humiliation that Hippolytus causes to her with his rejection drove her to suicide. It is a death because of love. As a woman in love, not as a queen, she feels the humiliation of the rejection. Dragged by Theseus away from her country, living as foreigner in a sort of exile and in solitude, and even neglected by that same Theseus, this guiltless Phaedra finds in her love the reason of her life. Once Hippolytus rejects her, she can only end that senseless life. Her solitude and her living away from her country in exile reflect the real life situation of the author, who committed suicide in 1941 by hanging herself, exactly like her heroine.

Tsvetaeva's Phaedra is crushed under the heavy burden of her fate, a fate still manipulated by Aphrodite, who here is an archenemy of Theseus rather than of Hippolytus.⁸⁵ Far differently, in the contemporaneous re-elaboration by the American writer Hilda Doolittle, Phaedra is a strong woman capable of mastering her own fate. She actively, in fact, pursues the fulfillment of her passion. Doolittle had a very long-term interest in Hippolytus and Phaedra.⁸⁶ She, in fact, first composed four monologues based on their story (ca. 1925–1926): *Hippolytus Temporizes*, *Phaedra*, *She Contrasts with Herself Hippolyta*, and *She Rebukes Hippolyta*. These poems constitute the preliminary handling by Doolittle of this subject-tale, which she later treated fully in her verse-play *Hippolytus Temporizes* (1927). In the first monologue of the same title as the later drama, Hippolytus appears far different from the traditional figure, in

84 It should be noted that already in de Unamuno, Phaedra's letter exculpates Hippolytus: see Rubino (2008) 28 and n. 3. Regarding this, see above, pp. 463–4.

85 See Bazzarelli (1987) 58–9: Tsvetaeva's Theseus, in fact, acknowledges that all happened because of Aphrodite's hostility against him (perhaps for Ariadne's abandonment) and proclaims the innocence of both Phaedra and Hippolytus.

86 See in particular Quin (1967) 50–2; also Mills (2002) 125–6.

that he himself is in conflict with his vow of chastity to Artemis. In *Phaedra* the writer presents the woman in a sympathetic light: she is in conflict over her will to resist to her passion. She feels irresistibly drawn toward Hippolytus. Although in the past she has been strong-willed, now she feels that her will is caught in a force that is not its own. In the monologue *She Contrasts with Herself Hippolyta*, Phaedra wonders about the youth's mother, Hippolyta, and thinks that he was born out of a loveless union. She also attempts an explanation of Hippolytus' resistance to love: the mother must have dedicated the child to the virgin goddess Artemis. Finally, in *She Rebukes Hippolyta* Phaedra wonders whether Hippolyta was really a chaste woman, or rather yielded herself willingly to Theseus. The most substantial manifestation of this long interest in the Hippolytus-Phaedra tale by Doolittle is the verse-drama *Hippolytus Temporizes*. Here the influence of Freud's psychoanalytical theories, which already shows through the four monologues, becomes apparent.⁸⁷ The obsessive devotion of Hippolytus to Artemis is presented by Doolittle rather as a compensatory mechanism for the loss of her mother, Hippolyta, who is thus put on a pedestal and identified with the goddess Artemis herself. Phaedra, here a strong woman, exploits the youth's obsessive and inappropriate attraction to the goddess for her own benefits. She sends her love-message to Hippolytus, and meets with him, by tricking him into believing that the message was from Artemis and that the woman of the night meeting was the goddess herself. This Phaedra plays Aphrodite, while acting the part of Artemis. She does succeed in seducing Hippolytus by manipulating his feelings. In this respect she is a winner. Yet this Phaedra, too, will end up hanging herself. This self-aware woman, strongly determined to fulfill her desire, chooses to die not out of concern for honor or reputation, nor for a feeling of guilt. It is (again!) because of the rejection of Hippolytus, who eventually does not recognize that Phaedra is the real, 'divine' woman he has loved in that night meeting. As for Hippolytus, he does not have here the integrity that characterizes him in Euripides. Not believing Phaedra's revelation, in a state of ecstasy, he goes to meet his death as well by being flung off his chariot. Building on, and innovating from, the version of the resurrection of Hippolytus,⁸⁸ Doolittle also has his Hippolytus revived by the god Helios. But, shocked by the youth's passionate confession of the intimacy that he thinks to have shared with Artemis, Helios orders him back to death.

In the 20th century sequence of re-elaborations of the Hippolytus-Phaedra tragedy by 'female hands', male authors do not miss, however, the chance to

87 Regarding this, see Camper (2003) IX–XV.

88 See above, n. 29.

get involved. Especially interesting for the innovative manipulation of the character of Hippolytus rather than that of Phaedra is the poem *The Cretan Woman* by the American poet Robinson Jeffers (1954). Although the title evokes Phaedra, Hippolytus is the 'hero'.⁸⁹ The religious devotion to Artemis and the related pledge of chastity, which since Euripides constitute the reason of his abhorrence toward women, become a kind of 'impediment of nature', in that it turns into homosexuality. This Hippolytus loves his friends, he has a rather effeminate companion, and he rejects the realm of sexual love and procreation, whose worship is grotesque (Jeffers, p. 327).⁹⁰ Aphrodite is often present in Jeffers' poem, while Artemis is absent. As in Euripides, so in Jeffers, yet in a different way, Phaedra is rather a tool of Aphrodite. This goddess is exalted to a primal, cosmic principle of nature that united the elements, "[...] make[s] man lean to the woman... the multitude of the stars in the sky to love each other, and love the earth..." (Jeffers, p. 323), and punishes and ruins those who act against this principle. When this Aphrodite plants in Phaedra the 'agony of love... like a poisoned sword' to punish Hippolytus, Phaedra comes to personify this cosmic principle, which is beyond good and evil. Aphrodite is the one who finally wins. Hippolytus will be falsely accused by a rejected Phaedra, who turns to violence and tricks her husband into killing his own son, to then cry out that she has lied. Phaedra will hang herself, leaving the stage to the triumphant goddess Aphrodite, whose words are far away from those of consolation which the Euripidean Artemis utters in the final scene of the Greek play. Commenting on the indifferent power of the gods, she makes explicit the message that the poet might have disguised through the story, a message that—as seen in Jeffers' treatment of Medea⁹¹—conveys environmental concerns, too: divinities are forces of nature, neither fear nor mercy move them, "we laugh in Heaven," Aphrodite coldly states (Jeffers, p. 363). Men may control their environment on earth and in space, but "Let them beware. Something is lurking hidden. There is always a knife in the flowers. There is always a lion beyond the firelight" (Jeffers, p. 363).

In the second half of the 20th century, above all starting from the '60s, the romance or novel appears to be a favorite literary genre for the revivals of this tragedy. Peculiarly interesting for the innovative figure of the fictional narrator is the novel by the British writer Mary Renault (1962), *The Bull from the Sea*. It is the sequel of a previous historical novel, *The King Must Die* (1958), where, tracing the early life and adventures of Theseus, Renault accounts for

89 See Mills (2002) 121–2.

90 Quotations and paraphrases are from Hunt (2001) 3: 315–63.

91 See above, pp. 395–6.

the killing of the Minotaur and his subsequent taking the control over Crete. It is here where he first met the child Phaedra.⁹² *The Bull from the Sea*, as its evocative title may suggest, continues the story of Theseus after his return from Crete with the new wife Phaedra. He has married her only for political reasons, to retain control over Crete. Political power and male-oriented culture constitute the framework of the inner drama of Phaedra, which is here retold by Theseus. Theseus is, indeed, the narrator, and the events are seen from his viewpoint. He does not make a mystery of the fact that Hippolytus' mother was his true love. Although he finds Phaedra attractive, she is not his soul mate. This neglected woman is shocked by the view of Hippolytus when she first meets him in Athens. Sick for her unspeakable desire, she exploits the healing skills of the youth, who cures her headache by putting his hand on her temples. Longing for this contact, the woman for several days summons him to alleviate her sickness. Another new figure is introduced: the son she had from Theseus, Akamante, who soon understands her mother's feeling for Hippolytus. It is Akamante, in fact, who will reveal the truth to Theseus once Phaedra, rejected and feeling trapped, proceeds to the well-known false accusation. Hippolytus meets his traditional death; Phaedra, too, dies, but by the hand of Theseus. And Theseus does not confine himself to killing Phaedra. He also makes sure that her reputation will be stained forever: he is the one who writes a letter, which incriminates Phaedra herself, as if she was there confessing her lie. Then Theseus coldly puts this letter in the hand of the woman's corpse. Theseus, in the end, is more central here than in other revivals. Not only is he the narrator, but he is also the author, we may say, of the tragic end, an end that would reflect his way of seeing, feeling, and fitting in the events.

While love and the struggle to retain that 'unspeakable' love, rather than simply lust, seem mostly to prevail in the re-elaborations that have so far been analyzed, and that, generally speaking, enhance a sympathetic view of the woman, not a drop of love seem to characterize the Belgian-French novelist Marguerite Yourcenar's figure of Phaedra in her *Phaedra, or Despair* (1936) and in her *divertissement* ("satiric play") by the title *Qui n'a pas son Minotaure?* (*Who Doesn't Have His Minotaure*, 1963). In both Phaedra seems rather to turn into an iceberg or insensible rock, i.e., a hard, cynic, cruel person: she is the product and the effect of her unhappy love. In other words, the character is not a struggling woman in love, forced, in a way, to extreme measures. It rather seems to be the woman one might become when incapable of being moved by

92 See Mills (2002) 126–8; Susanetti (2005) 266–7; Rubino (2008) 76–9.

anything upon a profound sentimental disillusion.⁹³ These two adaptations of Phaedra's character,⁹⁴ and the declaration of drawing her own inspiration—at least for the first work—from a sentimental crisis,⁹⁵ would allow us to suppose that Yourcenar makes this woman a vehicle to convey her suffering and disappointment in the matter of love. *Phaedra, or Despair* is a lyric prose piece that significantly opens the collection of love lyric prose *Feux* (*Fire*, 1936). Consisting of very short tales or monologues, all the lyric prose pieces convey the author's notion of love, which is meant as a totalizing experience, as a 'disease' and a vocation. The love of the author is a desperate one. Not accidentally, I think, she locates two stories of anguished love and suicide in the two most emphatic places of the collection, at the beginning with Phaedra and at the end with Sappho. The unhappy, impossible love provokes the kind of despair that might turn the lover into a cruel avenger. This is what happens to Phaedra who, in front of the imperturbable coldness of Hippolytus, becomes herself an iceberg. She coldly invents the accusation of rape, which is more than a false accusation. To this Phaedra's eyes it is the 'translation' into other words of the outrage she feels she has suffered for being rejected. Although the lie grants her an otherwise impossible gratification, it also drives her to death. She will die ingesting poison. In the satiric play *Who Doesn't Have His Minotaure?* Phaedra appears even crueler. Focusing on the rivalry between Ariadne and Phaedra over Theseus, the author presents Ariadne as a figure of transcendence, a personification of pure love, capable of transforming a poor man, trembling in front of the monster, into a hero. Phaedra, on the contrary, is the personification of the destructive force of love. The play consists of ten scenes. Phaedra appears, only as a voice, in the last four scenes, just to tragically make fun of Theseus. She is presented as the one who is seeking revenge, a revenge that has its target in Theseus rather than in Hippolytus. The sign of her cruelty is the vicious hypothesis of Theseus that she has eventually retracted the charge against Hippolytus not to tell him the truth, but only to tease him, to doubly torture him leaving him in suspicion over whether he has killed his son—rather than punishing him on account of Phaedra's charge. While this suspicion, which Phaedra manages to create, is an unparalleled innovation in the history of the reception of *Hippolytus*, it also constitutes one of the most

93 This is, at least, my personal interpretation based on the reading of Yourcenar's text and the scholarship on it. As to the latter, see, e.g., Citti/Neri (2001) 98–100; Susanetti (2005) 267–9; Rubino (2008) 57–66; Grosse (2010) 530.

94 This writer actually dealt with Phaedra's story, and more generally with the Cretan Women, more than twice: see Rubino (2008) 63–4.

95 See Rubino (2008) 60.

negative features ever ascribed to Phaedra. The Minotaur, mentioned in the title, is a metaphor for human destiny, if not retribution: each man has to face his monster and to cope with his destiny. Love plays a major role in human destiny, and, in Yourcenar's words, "love is a punishment. We all are punished for we have been not able to live alone."⁹⁶

A bold but more sympathetic Phaedra, a 'human, common' Phaedra, is the one created by the modern Greek poet Yannis/Ghiannis Ritsos (1909–1990), a left-wing activist who was forced into exile during the military dictatorship in modern Greece (ca. 1967–1971). It was during his exile, confined to an assigned residence in the island of Samos, that Ritsos composed a series of dramatic monologues inspired by ancient Greek mythology. *Phaedra* (1974–1975) is one of these theatrical monologues, later assembled into a collection under the title *Tetarti Diastasi* (*Fourth Dimension*, 1978). This collection comprises about seventeen pieces based on myths primarily belonging to the cycles of the House of Atreus and of the Trojan War. Their themes of revenge, slaughters, fighting, separation etc. echoed and paralleled the violent and turbulent decades of recent Greek history in which Ritsos was active. Those monologues are, in fact, timeless poetic paradigm of the condition of Greece, past and present. Intertwining the ancient with the modern, poetry with prose, *Phaedra* consists of a dramatic verse confession of the unbearable passion of the heroine, who speaks in the first person, addressing a mute Hippolytus. The story is taken for granted, and the speech of the monologue is supposed to occur after Hippolytus' reaction to the nurse and just before the return of Theseus to find his wife hanged and his son accused.⁹⁷ The scene is set through a prologue in prose (about 40 lines) in which Phaedra is described as a woman probably over forty, sitting in a rocking chair, with her eyes shut and maybe fantasizing about Hippolytus. Halfway through the prologue, Hippolytus arrives and greets her. Trying to appear less nervous than she is, she lights a cigarette.⁹⁸ A room with windows covered by white curtains, a table, a sofa and a mirror define the space of the monologue. After the speech that Phaedra delivers to an unseen Hippolytus, a speech that, following the prologue, constitutes the core of this theatrical piece, the whole is ended through an epilogue in prose (about 30 lines) that resumes the final act of the ancient model with some innovations. Hippolytus, in fact, departs to take a bath, while Theseus arrives and finds his wife hanging from the roof with the accusatory letter. Ritsos' Phaedra is a self-

96 See Rubino (2008) 62.

97 See Trombino (1990); Savvas (1995); Susanetti (2005) 269–70; Morfakidis-Pociña (2008).

98 This is one of the anachronisms through which Ritsos intertwines the ancient and the modern: see Savvas (1995) 22.

aware woman who courageously dismisses the mask of hypocrisy to confess her true passion. In Ritsos Phaedra's 'mask' is nothing else than a denial of the truth, a censure of the people's real 'face', a mask that, every morning, before doing anything else, all people put on. These, in fact, are the sad considerations of Ritsos' Phaedra. And, in her eyes, Hippolytus' chastity is a mask, too, a mask that cowardly covers the real, but silenced, desires. Phaedra cannot bear it anymore. She will die, but not before she has spoken with the youth, giving way to her feeling with all the sincerity and boldness she can. Her speaking out provides cleansing and relief: there is no need of a mask anymore. Her courage, however, has its price. The solitude of Phaedra's room, which is a physical representation of the social and psychological trap into which the heroine is entrapped, might echo the author's biographic experience of isolation and confinement. Similarly, the intolerance of life's insincerity and lies—covered up by the mask worn everyday—might parallel the author's rebellion. As he did with other mythological figures, Ritsos modernizes Phaedra as a 'common person', whose 'tragedy' becomes the expression of the author's concerns with the pain and helplessness of fragile humanity. Interestingly, a symbol of suffering, the cross, seals the end of this work. In the very last sentence of the epilogue, there is a reference to the shadows of two statues which form a cross over the body of the hanging Phaedra. The two statues are those of the contending goddesses of the ancient model, Artemis and Aphrodite, symbols of primordial forces and of the mysterious and cruel ways of fate. The cross that their shadows form on Phaedra's corpse, blending into a unified image, accentuates the helplessness of Phaedra's circumstances, and, with her, of those of humankind.

In one way or another, the different revivals of Euripides' tragedy seem to reflect the polarization between those who defend Phaedra's innocence and those who claim her guilt, a polarization that has been characterizing the scholarship, which accordingly emphasizes different aspects of both the character and the story. As we have seen, in Ritsos we find the potential of Phaedra for being an icon of rebellion and anti-conformism, due to her questionable feeling, her standing for that, and her dismissing the mask of hypocrisy that—Ritsos thinks—we all wear. This potential is fully exploited in the innovative Phaedra imaged by the Sicilian writer Lara Cardella in her novel *Fedra se ne va* (*Phaedra leaves*, 1992).⁹⁹ Cardella's best-known novel is her first one, *Volevo i Pantaloni* (1989), which was translated into English, too, with the title *Good Girls don't wear trousers* (1993). By that time, it provoked a scandal, above all in the small Sicilian community where the author was born and was living,

99 See Rubino (2008) 83–7.

given that it conveyed a strong criticism of the backwardness of the contemporary, traditional Sicilian society. As the title suggests, the protagonist is a rebel woman who would dare to challenge the male domain, which is eloquently represented, by way of metaphor, through the dress typically belonging to male: the pants. Unconventional and rebellious also is Cardella's Phaedra, who does not simply dare to fall in love with her stepson, but, in the face of his rejection and aware of her unhappiness with Theseus, dares to leave. She abandons Theseus, leaves behind her stepson, and engages elsewhere in a series of romantic adventures, all which end unhappily, until she becomes a nun. With her story set in two small communities of contemporary Sicily, this Phaedra is an independent woman who does not behave in accordance with what social conventions would demand from her, namely acceptance and silence. Cardella's Phaedra does not give up, once she has failed with her true love. She leaves and tries to move on with her life. She is not vengeful at all. Perceiving Euripides' *Hippolytus* as a drama staging a restless and unsettled woman, Cardella re-uses this female figure by turning her into a woman who, in such an old-fashioned society as that of small Sicilian villages, would be seen as progressive. Cardella thus aligns this novel with the main social themes that she has been exploring and denouncing, since her first work, *Volevo i pantaloni*. This re-invention of Phaedra's character can be appreciated; yet, it lacks psychological depth. Interestingly, Cardella's narrative technique also gives a special touch to this revival of the Phaedra story. The same basic story, i.e., marriage with Theseus, falling in love with Hippolytus, propositioning through the aunt-nurse, and rejection by Hippolytus, is told over and over by the main characters in different way, i.e., according to the viewpoint of the character who is the 'on call' narrator. The same story is thus filtered and deconstructed through different voices. This is a technique that, so far as we may ascertain, has not been used before in any adaptation of the ancient work. In this respect, Cardella's novel seems to constitute a predecessor of Christa Wolf's *Medea*.¹⁰⁰

Another interesting adaptation of the story aimed at addressing some socio-cultural issues is the *Hippolyta* by Manuel Fernandes' (1994).¹⁰¹ By reversing the roles and genders of the main characters, *Hippolyta* describes modern tragedies, such as parental abuse, lack of communication or miscommunication between parent and child, and emotional excesses of teenagers. Hippolyta is a victim of the advances and an attempted rape by her stepfather, who, failing in his repeated attempts of seduction, leaves but not before he sends a letter

100 See above, pp. 402–4.

101 See McDonald (1994); Mills (2002) 94–5, 123.

that falsely accuses the stepdaughter of continued advances. The mother, the 'inverted' Theseus, believes the letter and does not give any credit to her daughter, who told her of the misbehavior of her stepfather, but vainly. Banished by her mother, Hippolyta, who never overcome the trauma of the loss of her real father, finds a gun and shoots at herself. This rewriting sheds some sympathetic light on the case of the original Hippolytus. Interestingly, the modern refiguring of the character into a female victim of parental abuse helps level that ancient unreachable model of virtue (i.e., Euripides' Hippolytus), almost obsessively devoted to 'worshipping' chastity, to a common, more ordinary person, a teenager, unfortunately the frequent victim of some sort of abuse within the family. It also allows us to relate more to the reaction of the mother-Theseus, in that hers is, again unfortunately, a typical reaction of a member of a family where the abuse takes place: difficulty in believing, resistance to really finding out the truth, and tendency to 'keep quiet'. It does not, however, do any justice to the original figure of Phaedra. In *Hippolyta* the stepfather (Phaedra's counterpart) is really an unscrupulous, cruel person. He does not have any of the psychological depth from the Greek model, to say the least. Gods, in this modern family drama, do not have space; the obsession of the original Hippolytus is re-invented and reshaped as the quasi-obsessive love of Hippolyta toward her real father, whom she says she will join when she commits suicide. She leaves her mother in a state of mind similar to that of the original Theseus, i.e., sadly coping and pondering what she came to recognize as her own mistake, without the consolation of a final reconciliation with her daughter.

This rewriting, which is one of the few by a 'male hand' in the 20th century, seems to redeem the figure of Hippolytus from the quasi-oblivion into which he has been confined, with the spotlight being focused on Phaedra. The mechanism by which this goal is pursued is of some interest. The author turns Hippolytus into a sympathetic female innocent victim, relegating the original, sympathetic Phaedra to the role of the stereotypically cruel and unscrupulous stepmother, though transformed in a stepfather. In my eyes this might be symptomatic of a still-negative, misogynistic reception of the original Phaedra in that she—a woman—is significantly re-used to denounce one of the most terrible actions that a human being can commit, such as child sexual abuse, which Euripides' Phaedra certainly did not commit. At the same time, converting an 'evil' stepmother—as traditionally Phaedra has been seen—into an evil stepfather raises ambiguous interpretations: is it rather the male gender, more commonly involved in stories of domestic abuse, the actual target? And, if yes, would such a thing redeem, in a way, Phaedra as if to say a woman cannot be capable of such an action? In one way or another, it seems that gender stereotypes are still involved.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

While the literary reception of the original tragedy, as we have seen, seems to privilege Phaedra over Hippolytus to the point that most of the re-elaborations are titled after her, in the figurative arts it is Hippolytus who attains primacy. The tragedy of Phaedra and Hippolytus becomes an iconographic theme only starting from the 4th century BC. It was evidently the theatrical productions that initiate the pictorial reception.¹⁰² The theme became especially popular in Greek funerary art from the 4th century BC on. It met with a flourishing revival in the Roman sarcophagi from the 2nd century AD on, when entombment became the ordinary funerary practice.¹⁰³ While the death, or 'fatal' fall, of Hippolytus from the chariot seems to be the most favored segment of the story in pictorial representations of the Modern Period¹⁰⁴—with some ancient prototypes as a precedent, the portrayal of Hippolytus as hunter dominates, instead, ancient art and frequently occurs on Roman sarcophagi. So far as we can ascertain, the earliest and most important piece of ancient art that represents the death of Hippolytus is an Apulian vase-painting datable between 350 and 330 BC and realized by Antiphilos, contemporaneous to the better known painter Apelles.¹⁰⁵ It is a very peculiar iconographic rendition of the tragic end of the hero in that it is far different from the standard version, according to which the youth fell from the chariot because of his horses' panic at the sight of the bull emerging from the sea. In this Apulian vase-painting the artist seems to imply that it was rather Hippolytus' fear at the sight of the bull that eventually caused the fatal fall and catastrophe. *Hippolytum emissio tauro expavescentem* ("Hippolytus who got scared at the rising of the bull") is indeed the descriptive comment of the painting by the Roman writer and naturalist Pliny the Elder (*Naturalis Historia* 35.114–5). The hero frightened by the sudden

102 See Balsamo (1899) with a detailed discussion on the issue.

103 See Ghiron-Bistagne (1981) 279. Ghiron-Bistagne's and Puntoni's (1884) studies are among the main ones pertaining to the ancient iconography of the Hippolytus-Phaedra motif. Valuable also is Oakley's study (1991): it specifically focuses on some newly discovered South Italian vase-paintings portraying the death of Hippolytus, which add to the most notorious one that is discussed above. For other references, see also below, nn. 104–105.

104 From the 17th to the 20th century Reid's survey (1993) II: 883–6 accounts for about seven representations (drawings, paintings and one marble statue) of the death of the hero, versus three paintings focusing on other moments of the story: regarding this, see below, p. 479.

105 See Puntoni (1884) 84; also Walters (1896) 136–8.

appearance of the bull lost control over his horse.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the artist innovates in relation to the traditional version by adding a new figure in the scene: Lyssa, the goddess of raving madness in animals. She appears before Hippolytus's chariot, thus contributing to the startling of the horses. Due to its symbolic meaning, the presence of Lyssa might be meant to emphasize the frenzy and loss of control which, in the end, dominate that fatal moment. In this way the artist perhaps meant to vividly render the 'unexpected', and the 'being not prepared to', which are the feelings that the report of the Euripidean messenger conveys, besides the horror. It might be interesting to note that the figure of Lyssa, shaped more or less in the same way, also appears in a previous vase-painting, attributed to the Lykaon Painter, datable around the 440 BC: the *Death of Actaeon*.¹⁰⁷ As is well-known, Actaeon was a passionate hunter, punished by Artemis for surprising her naked, whether by plan or accident, as she was taking a bath in a spring. He was transformed into a stag and then was left to the mercy of his dogs, by which he was torn up (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3. 138–255). Lykaon's painting portrays, in the center, Actaeon in the moment in which he is about to turn into a stag and be dismembered by his dogs; on the right, Artemis aiming at him with a flaming torch and a quiver; and on the left, Lyssa, symbolizing the raving madness of the dogs. Without meaning to imply a possible influence by this painter on Antiphilos, the presence of Lyssa in the scene of death of two passionate hunters who ended up to being dismembered by frenzied animals is notable.

As mentioned, the most successful, widespread iconographic motif in Late Antiquity is the activity to which Hippolytus was devoted, i.e., hunting. The isolation of this specific, paramount trait of the hero in the representations on sarcophagi might be due to the connection that the Ancients saw between hunting and male *virtus* ("virtue/strength/character"); it thus would be an homage to the *virtus* of the dead.¹⁰⁸ This motif is often coupled with the one pertaining to the lovesick Phaedra: she appears seated with her head slightly thrown back and surrounded by servants. Grief is mainly the feeling that this pictorial type of Phaedra intended to visualize.¹⁰⁹ Once decontextualized, the

106 See Puntoni (1884) 84–5. For a different interpretation of this detail, see Balsamo (1899) 423–4, 432.

107 On this motif in the ancient iconography, see the concise analysis in Moog-Grünewaldt (2010a) 15–6; with reference to the vase-painting described above, see Guimond (1981); also Robertson (1992) 211–2.

108 Ghiron-Bistagne (1981) 288; Agosti (2007) 116.

109 Specifically with reference to the Phaedra motif, there are two typologies of her iconographic representation: (1) Phaedra as languishing woman, and (2) Phaedra *despoina*

specific traits of the two characters were felt as appropriate to be portrayed on sarcophagi.¹¹⁰ Indeed, while the skills and virtue of Hippolytus would recall the *virtus* of the dead, the grief of Phaedra makes her an ideal representation of a wife' or mother's mourning for the loss either of her husband or son. And, where it appears, Theseus' horror, which in context represents his reaction to the news of his son's and wife's death, once decontextualized in the sarcophagi, represents the natural sorrow and grief of a father.¹¹¹ The characters' features thus become moral *exempla*. This peculiar kind of reception, i.e., in terms of moral paradigms, seems to have affected in particular the production of mosaics in Late Antiquity. There is a particular mosaic, datable by the age of the emperor Justinian (ca. 6th century AD), which is worth mentioning. This mosaic comes from a peripheral area of the Roman Empire, Giordania, namely from its most important town Madaba, where excavations started at the end of the 19th century.¹¹² Found under the pavement of a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the central part of this mosaic portrays segments and figures of the tragedy of Hippolytus: Phaedra in grief is looking at Hippolytus, who seems to depart for the hunt; there are two maidens who assist Phaedra by trying to console her; besides Hippolytus leaving for the hunt, there are some traces of his attendants, and only an arm remains of the one who should have represented the nurse.¹¹³ The scene might allude to the central moment of Euripides' tragedy, i.e., the revelation of Phaedra's 'secret' by the nurse to Hippolytus, his running away in reaction, and the despair of Phaedra. The omission of the very end of Hippolytus (here, as said, he just departs) is seen as a key to what could have been the current reception of the story. The preference for mythological themes in art was certainly an expression of the classicism promoted by the emperor Justinian. But Justinian aimed at using this classicism, i.e., the pagan cultural traditions, as a 'language' to express and firmly establish the principles

("mistress") on a throne: Ghrion-Bistagne (1981) espec. 265–70. The first type was labeled as *motif de Phèdre* by Ch. Picard in his handbook of Greek Archeology, where he described the oldest samples of this theme.

110 This is in accordance with the 'de-contextualization theory' proposed by Zanker (2002), on which see also Agosti (2007) 116–7.

111 Among several, two sarcophagi, very similar to each other, stand out: the sarcophagus of Agrigento and the sarcophagus of Saint Petersburg. Valuable and detailed analyses are in Balsamo (1899) 427–9; and in Ghiron-Bistagne (1981) 278–9 and nn. 33–4.

112 For a complete and detailed analysis of this mosaic, see Agosti (2007).

113 It should be noted that this identification of the characters present in the scene has been facilitated by the fact that the names are inscribed beside and/or above each figure. As for the nurse, the label *geraia* (= old woman) should be the clue for her identification.

of the Christian religion. In this specific context, Hippolytus came to symbolize wisdom and moderation, i.e., the *sophrosyne* of those who are able to resist and defy the ruinous force of love. He thus came to be identified with the biblical Joseph, whose virtue did not yield to the advances of the wife of Putiphar.¹¹⁴ The mosaic thus mirrors the current moralistic reception of the story: the classical myth provides the linguistic code, while the core message is completely integrated into the new Christian-oriented morality.

The motif of Hippolytus dragged by his chariot is, however, the one that became particularly popular through the centuries. In the Modern Period *The Death of Hippolytus* (1610) by the Flemish baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens inaugurates a long series of pictorial representations of this specific theme. From Rubens to the Italian artist Giorgio De Chirico in the 20th century, if we count only the most significant ones, there are about seven representations, in the forms of painting, drawing and sculpture, of the death/fall of Hippolytus, while only three focus on other moments, mostly centering around Phaedra, after whom the works are named. They are: the drawing *Phaidra offenbart in Fieberphantasien den troezenischen Frauen ihre Leidenschaft für Hippolytus* ("In fervish fantasies Phaedra reveals to the Troezenian women her passion for Hippolytus") by the German artist Henry Fuseli (1815); the painting *Phaedra* by the French painter Alexander Cabanel (1889); and the drawing *Phédre* by the English artist Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1898).¹¹⁵

Rubens' oil painting (1610), as well as the slightly later ink drawing by the French painter Nicolas Poussin (1640), presents the death of the hero as a Baroque study in movement. At the left of the picture a sea-monster, half bull, half dragon, is portrayed as he is rising out of the sea; in the center the horses are depicted as they are straining off in different direction, while the fallen Hippolytus is being dragged by the horses' reins in the diagonal. The emphasis on the movements adds to the tragedy of the event by vividly rendering the frenzied atmosphere of the situation. While the horror of this end remains the center of the following representations, a different tone characterizes the more recent version of the theme by De Chirico, *Ippolito e Compagni* (= "Hippolytus

114 On this motif, see above, nn. 10, 55. With reference to the equivalence between Hippolytus and Joseph in the iconography of the time, see Agosti (2007) 123–4.

115 These observations are based on the survey-list provided by Reid (see above, n. 104). As to the Middle Ages, the most important medium of artistic representation for myth was book illumination, but the Hippolytus-Phaedra story seems not to have been very popular: see Grosse (2010) 525.

and his friends" 1963).¹¹⁶ Hippolytus is portrayed naked, or with a loincloth, while working as horse-tamer together with a few attendants/friends. The scene is set on a seashore. This location, the presence of a Hermes—the 'psychopomp' god—fluttering over the scene, and, by way of irony, the horse-taming activity, might all allude to the impending death.

As mentioned, the representations focusing on Phaedra are fewer. The most well known have been produced in the 19th century and are affected by the century's predilection for lascivious, reclining nudes.¹¹⁷ Phaedra is mostly portrayed as disconsolate, stretched out on a couch. Cabanel's painting best represent this type, which is a re-elaboration of a motif, the 'Phaedra motif', that already appears in the ancient funerary iconography.¹¹⁸

An interesting, more recent pictorial work that focuses on Phaedra, but includes, at the same time, as background, the other essential segments of her tragedy, is the oil-painting *Fedra e Ippolito* (= "Phaedra and Hippolytus"—Fig. 1) by the Italian artist Sandra Tesi (1997).¹¹⁹ Through a play of vertical and horizontal arrangements, the artist juxtaposes the two main characters, Phaedra, who stands vertically, and Hippolytus, who lies dead, beside the woman, horizontally. With an extreme synthesis, the artist has portrayed the whole tragic story. If the facial expression of Phaedra, in the artist's intentions, mirrors her inner tangle of feelings—from her love to the awareness of the impossibility of that love, from her sense of 'guilt' to her sad resignation—Hippolytus represents the fatal end of that tangle as he innocently lies dead. Other items contribute to synthetically illustrating the main threads of the tragedy. A horse behind the dead youth symbolizes both the passion of Hippolytus, thus his 'love' and devotion for Artemis, and—I would think—the 'cause', figurative and physical, of his death. All tragedy—as we know—begins because of his devotion to Artemis and scorn for Aphrodite, and ends with his horse(s) 'dragging' him to death. In the background, in the center, there is a partial view of a Greek temple. Besides setting the scene in antiquity, it seems to provide a solemnity that might represent order and rationality, over which passion and emotion have indeed prevailed.

116 The 1963 painting is, indeed, the fifth 'versions' of De Chirico's same first painting, which he completed in 1951. On this painting, see Grosse (2010) 531.

117 Grosse (2010) 530.

118 See above, n. 109.

119 I would like to thank Prof. E. Magnelli (University of Florence, Italy) and Prof. S. Orlando (president of the Florence's delegation of the Italian Association of Classics—AICC) who helped me to contact the artist and thus receive the permission to print the painting in this volume.



FIGURE 1 Sandra Tesi, *Fedra ed Ippolito* (1997), oil on canvas, 100 × 130 cm., © Sandra Tesi (Courtesy of Sandra Tesi).

Music

Quite a good number of operas on the tragedy of Hippolytus and Phaedra were produced in the 18th century.¹²⁰ Most of them are lost, and most of the surviving ones are inspired by Racine's re-elaboration of the ancient tragedy,

¹²⁰ In Reid's list (see above, n. 104), it is possible to count eight operas for the 18th century, *versus* five for the 19th and another five for the 20th century. As to the 20th century, however, the list is not exhaustive. There are valuable operas which are not listed there: see below, *ooo*. For 17th-century Opera, see Heller (2010).

although features that can be traced back to Euripides can be identified. Jean Philippe Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* ("Hippolytus and Aricie," 1733), opens 'the season' of the operas devoted to this tragedy in the 18th century. First performed at the *L'Opéra* in Paris, with libretto by Simon Joseph Pellegrin, as the title may suggest, it does not focus much on Phaedra and Hippolytus but on the hindered love between the youth and Aricie. The girl is indeed forced by Theseus to become a priestess of the goddess Diana.¹²¹ As for Phaedra, she appears since the raising of the curtain as a jealous woman who does her best to impede the union between Hippolytus and Aricie, trying even to tempt the youth with political ambitions. As she fails, the plot continues according to Racine's version, i.e., with the false accusation by the nurse and the curse of Theseus. But, consistently with the genre of French opera, which required a happy ending, Hippolytus is eventually revived and brought to Latium, where he can rejoin his beloved Aricie. A contamination from the other ancient version of Hippolytus' end, as testified to by Virgil and Ovid,¹²² is evident. Theseus has here a most rewarding musical role, and the composer proved to be exceptional in rendering conflicting and shifting emotions through highly dramatic music. Although Racine is the basic source, this opera introduces a prologue with a confrontation between Diana and Amour, which has its roots in the Euripidean prologue.¹²³ Rameau's opera achieved a great public success to the point that it has been seen as a milestone in the history of French opera. A few years later (1759) it was re-proposed in an Italian version by Tommaso Traetta, whose debt to Rameau is clear from the title *Ippolito e Aricia*.

In the 19th century this Euripidean tragedy in opera seems to have fell into obscurity. It definitely returns to the repertoires in the 20th century, and the focus shifts to Phaedra. Early in this century one of the most well-known example is the opera *Fedra*, by the Italian composer Ildebrando Pizzetti on libretto of Gabriele d'Annunzio. First performed in 1915, it did not achieve a good public success. More revivals occurred in the second half of this century.¹²⁴ In 1975, the English composer and pianist Benjamin Britten composed *Phaedra*, a dramatic cantata for mezzo-soprano, first performed in 1976 at the Aldeburgh festival.¹²⁵ This piece consists of a set of selected passages from the translation

121 For an overview, see Susanetti (2005) 257–8; Grosse (2010) 528; with a closer attention to musical technicalities, see Righini (2003).

122 See above, n. 29.

123 About the structural innovation in the genre of French opera represented by this prologue, see Righini (2003) 161.

124 See Brown (2004) 302–3.

125 On Britten's *Phaedra*, see Righini (2003) 168–9; Grosse (2010) 531.

of Racine's play by the poet Robert Lowell. Phaedra performs three monologues: the first is directed to Hippolytus, the second to the nurse Oenone, and the last to Theseus. While dying as the poison does its work, in bright melody the last word that the heroine sings is "purity", which only her death will restore. Somewhat innovative is the opera *Phèdre* by the Italian composer Sylvano Bussotti (1988), in three acts. While the characters are the traditional ones, they act in a sequence of different historical and geographical settings. Act 1 is set in ancient Greece; Act 2 takes place at the Hotel de Bourgogne (Paris) in 1677, on the occasion of the first performance of Racine's tragedy; and Act 3 occurs in 20th-century Paris. The composer devised this innovative technique of presentation to emphasize how the same human passions can be found in a variety of different historical contexts. For the 20th century it is finally worth mentioning a very recent televised musical drama, *Ode to Phaedra*, by the contemporary jazz, bassist and composer George Roumanis (1995). It was first broadcast on American television on August 25, 1995. The most innovative feature is the 'double' death of Phaedra: after committing suicide through poison, she is revived by Aphrodite, but dies again by her own sword.

At the dawn of the 21st century (ca. 2005), the German composer Hans Werner Henze, today's most appreciated composer of music for operas, has written a compelling opera, *Phaedra: A Concert Opera* with a German libretto by Christian Lehnert. The first world premiere occurred in September 2007 at the Berlin Staatsoper.¹²⁶ Consisting of two acts, clearly inspired by Euripides and Ovid (namely, the *Metamorphoses*), it combines the core of the original tragedy (resulting in the death of the two main characters) with the sequel of Hippolytus' story, i.e., the resurrection of the youth as Virbius by the intervention of Artemis. Retaining the divine setting of the Greek model, the story is enacted by five characters: Phaedra and her divine counterpart Aphrodite, Hippolytus and his divine counterpart Artemis, and a new figure: the Minotaur. As for the two axes Phaedra-Aphrodite and Hippolytus-Artemis, Henze emphasizes the resulting duality by leading their voices in parallel. The voice of Phaedra, a mezzo soprano, and that of Aphrodite, a soprano, often join in duet. And Hippolytus, a tenor, and Artemis, a countertenor, sometimes sing together, too. As for the new character, the choice might be due to the highly symbolic power of that character, which works on many levels for both Phaedra and Hippolytus. The Minotaur is, in fact, closely related to both of them through their ancestry. As is well known, it was the product both of a deviant desire of Phaedra's mother and of a divine curse, and it was killed by Hippolytus' father, Theseus. The Minotaur's birth and death are owed to the

126 See Petersen (2007).

parents of the two main characters; his birth evokes illicit desire like that of Phaedra for her stepson; and his death at the hands of Theseus foreshadows Hippolytus' death at the same hands. The Minotaur, indeed, here replaces the sea-monster that, upon Theseus' request to Poseidon, rose from the waves and provoked Hippolytus' death. The first production, and its several rehearsals, have been warmly welcomed by the audience. The American premiere of Henze's opera occurred in June 2011 at the Perelman Theater in Philadelphia, as a production of the Opera Company of Philadelphia. It has scored a substantial artistic coup.

Dance

Choreographies inspired by the Hippolytus-Phaedra theme appear as early as the 17th century. Very likely under the influence of Racine's play, the French composer and singer Louis de Lacoste creates the ballet *Aricie*, first performed in Paris in 1697.¹²⁷ A very explosion of ballets revisiting this ancient tragedy occur, however, in the 20th century, and in particular in the '60s. As with many a mythical theme, so with the Phaedra's one, the best known American modern dancer and choreographer Martha Graham might be regarded as the pioneer. She created her choreography *Phaedra* first in 1962. This was then subsequently reworked into *Phaedra's Dream* in 1983.¹²⁸ One of the most memorable scenes in this dance is the 'battle of wills', which resonates with the contest between Aphrodite and Artemis in Euripides' play and which was rendered through a veiled ball game. Graham's choreography of *Phaedra* emphasizes the transgressiveness that traditionally is ascribed to Phaedra. It seems that in this dance Graham went too far, to the point that two Representatives, offended by the overt eroticism, denounced the choreography in Congress: they complained that it was a state-subsidized pornography.¹²⁹ Two motifs were found particularly offensive: Graham's projection of Phaedra's dream of Pasiphae's union with the bull, and her enactment of the alleged rape before Theseus' eyes.

A few years later Graham's first choreography, in 1966, the Swedish choreographer Birgit Cullberg, who studied with Graham, too, created and performed *I am not you, Phaedra theme*.¹³⁰ In 1968, the American dancer Wendy Osseman realized the choreography *Hippolytus* in New York. This concentration of ballets on the Phaedra's theme in the sixties is certainly striking. Some think that

127 Reid (1993) 11: 884.

128 See Callens (2009) 161–5.

129 Regarding this, see De Mille (1991) 354–5 (these pages also contains an analysis of the *Phaedra* ballet).

130 See Koegler (1977) 139.

it might be due to the influence of the contemporaneous movie by Dassin.¹³¹ I would, however, add to this that a possible influence of the current feminist wave should not be excluded, given the reception of Phaedra as a transgressive woman.¹³²

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Transgression seems, indeed, to be the distinguishing mark of most of the modern and contemporaneous productions of this tragedy. It is the trait that seems to have most survived, and, on occasion, it appears freed from its negative stain. In recent adaptations above all, but not exclusively, by feminist playwrights, Phaedra's transgression becomes an act of courage, the courage to go against the mainstream,¹³³ a courage which at times goes to the extreme, turning into cruel cynicism, if not violence. An exception to this trend is the play *Living Quarters: After Hippolytus* by the Irish playwright Brian Friel (1977).

131 E.g., Rubino (2008) 24. On Dassin' film, see below, pp. 492–4.

132 A recent dance performance touching on Euripides' *Hippolytus* is *Herakles via Phaedra: A Dance Theatre Epic* (2006), a musical conceived, directed and choreographed by the founder of the 'more-than-avant guard' theatre La MaMa, Ellen Stewart. As the title suggests, it combines two Euripidean tragedies, *Heracles* (perhaps with also some input from Sophocle's *Women of Trachis*) and *Hippolytus*. The piece consists of songs and dances, with almost no dialogue, and with a theme and musical setting evoking the Jazz Age. Its basic mark, and, according to some reviews, shortcoming, is the presence of too many theatrical devices, including puppets and masks from different countries (Japan, India, Africa and Greece). Little attention is devoted to the storyline. Here Phaedra is a handmaiden of Aphrodite who succeeded in winning Theseus' heart. Later, as we know from Euripides, by the interfering of the goddess, she fell in love with Theseus' son, hence the tragic end came. Theseus (who assisted Heracles in his 12 labors) is the link between the two intertwined stories and the divergent ends of their main characters: Heracles' ascending to glory, and Phaedra's descending to her tragic death. It has been observed that the production is meant to emphasize this link through Theseus as 'pivot point.' But, although this musical touches on the major moments of the 'tragedy' of Phaedra—as portrayed by Euripides—Phaedra is granted a short presence on stage, about ten minutes (out of an hour and thirty five minute running time); furthermore, despite the title, her story lends no better understanding to that of Heracles: see Wilson (2006). Much more time is devoted to cover Heracles' story. This is the reason for which I preferred to confine this account in a note. For Heracles' part, see below, p. 575. On this musical see also Riley (2008) 249–50.

133 See, e.g., Black (2009) 146 and n. 43.

First performed at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1977, Friel's reworking of the Hippolytus-Phaedra tragedy is unique and original on account of both its re-elaborated plot and the theatrical techniques in use.¹³⁴ As for the plot, although Friel retains the triangle father, son, and stepmother, the tragic core is neither the passion and struggle of the stepmother nor the unfair death of an innocent youth. None of them is the real protagonist. It is the Theseus-figure, a commandant of the Irish army, Frank Butler, who is the center and the real tragic hero, the one who dies committing suicide, for not being able to bear the unbearable truth. The demise of the cold, uncommunicative, yet innocent father/husband marks the climax of the play. Contrary to the ancient model, the Phaedra-figure, Anna Butler, second wife of Frank, and the Hippolytus-figure, Ben Butler, the stepson, both survive. Not only do they survive; they also had consensual relationship during Frank's absence. Frank, who has been in the army all his life, has always been absent and neglectful toward Phaedra-Anna, just like the ancient Theseus. Phaedra-Anna has had to endure the discomfort of living away from her homeland, in the wilds of the County Donegal, where the play is set, almost like her ancient counterpart who was living away from her land, in Troezen. Hippolytus-Ben, marked as a 'spoiled mother's boy' (Friel, p. 187),¹³⁵ has no job, lives in a caravan by the sea, and is not married. More than it can be said of Euripides' Hippolytus, Ben has a conflictive relationship with his father, whom he considers responsible for the death of his own mother. Indeed, he seems to commit adultery out of revenge, while Anna does so only out of boredom and loneliness. She is not overcome by true passion. As said, the stepmother and the stepson here keep living, but they fade away. Anna moves to America to conduct an empty, rather than free, life; Ben departs first for Scotland, then returns to his little town to waste his life drinking. As in most Irish plays based on Greek tragedy, so in this play some scholars tend to see a political overtone resulting in protest and/or comment on contemporary social and political circumstances, above all with reference to the so-called 'Irish trouble'.¹³⁶ Betrayal, separation, miscommunication within the family, that is, the disintegration of the family—which is the heart of this play—becomes "a parable of Ireland with the inner strife and betrayal which occur within the family itself."¹³⁷ As hinted at above, Friel's reworking of Euripides' play is innovative and original in dramatic technique as well. Besides the introduction of siblings (namely, sisters) of Hippolytus-

134 See McDonald (1998), (2002) 291–3; also, Lloyd (2000).

135 All quotations are from Friel (1996).

136 Regarding this, see also above, p. 401 and n. 73.

137 McDonald (1998) 45.

Ben, an interesting entry from the aesthetic and theatrical viewpoint is that of a narrator-character, called Sir, who reads from a ledger. It serves as a script or as a promptbook for the self-conscious production created by the characters themselves. A degree of metatheatricality is involved.¹³⁸ The heart of the work is, in fact, 'a play within-a-play'. The story is set in the present but the enacted action takes place 'some years ago'. All the characters can see themselves contemporaneously in the present and in the past, and can describe the past events which are about to be re-enacted on the stage. Sir acts like a stage manager, who also grants the dramatic characters a certain degree of liberty to discuss their roles. He controls what the audience sees and what the characters do within the fictional world of the play. His relationship with the members of Butler's family, i.e., the dramatic personages, resembles the one between the Director and the characters in the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello (1921).¹³⁹ Sometimes Sir acts rather as the author, selecting among the events recorded on the ledger the ones that must be represented. He can choose to omit what is irrelevant, but cannot depart from the ledger. The ledger, i.e., the script, is a 'datum', and might be seen as a metaphor for the ancient fate, which plays a major role in Euripides' *Hippolytus*.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, one of the fascinations of Friel's *Living Quarters* comes from the more radical suggestion that everything is determined by fate, even those things that seem to be the product of free choice. Interestingly, among the characters Phaedra-Anna has the most complex relationship with Sir and, consequently, the ledger. The transgressive, uncontrollable nature that has usually been associated with her seems to find expression in her being recalcitrant to what has been established for her. She seems a true Pirandellian character, in that she cannot find a satisfactory role and is thus always arguing with the director. Neither can she find a satisfactory end. While the others have fulfilled their role in the story for good or for bad, she is doomed to an empty life, as if she has no existence at all outside the play. Differently from the ancient model, although this Phaedra survives, she is fated to fall into oblivion. The impression with which Friel leaves the audience is that of desolation and emptiness, rather than that of an assertion of some sort of freedom.

While Friel's reworking centers on the drama of the Theseus-figure, a more recent stage-adaptation of Euripides' play is all about Hippolytus, since the title might be seen as an ironic label standing for Hippolytus. It is *Phaedra's*

138 See Jones (1996).

139 See Murray (1992).

140 McDonald (1998) 40 tends to see the narrator either as fate/god, or, applying a political reading, even as North England.

Love by Sarah Kane, first performed under her direction in 1996 at the Gate Theatre in London. Sarah Kane is one of the most discussed, controversial, and provocative figure among contemporaneous British playwrights, who committed suicide at the young age of twenty-eight (1999). She is regarded as a 'child' of what has become known as the 'New Brutalism', an aesthetic trend marked by the rejection of the norms of the traditional British stage while preference is granted to explicit sexual and violent content.¹⁴¹ Kane's plays have been seen either as brutal, yet honest, representation of human relationships, or childish and disgusting works, aimed at shocking without communicating any substantial message. Indeed, crudity and violence, both of language and action, are typical marks of Kane's plays. Yet they are rather an exploration of violence in contemporary culture and a denunciation of the almost frenetic search for sensation, a search in which, to this playwright's eyes, the masses are engaged. *Phaedra's Love*, far from being a tragedy of love, is a brutal tragic-comic sketch¹⁴² of an intricate net of incestuous relationships in which all the major characters are involved. The ancient story is converted into a sort of springboard for exploring issues of social decay in post-Thatcher Britain. The names of the characters are mostly preserved, as well as their role and social status: Hippolytus is a prince, Phaedra a queen, and Theseus a king. The nurse is replaced by a new figure, Strophe, daughter of Phaedra from a previous relationship. The presence of twenty-four-hour television, of potato chips and hamburgers suggests a contemporaneous setting. This royal family is presented as living in a void that lacks any morality and societal norms. Yet they are attentive to keeping up appearances, with the exception of Hippolytus. The young prince is the most altered character. Far from being a virtuous, aloof virgin, he is a constantly bored youth who is addicted to fast food, prompt to engage in compulsive sex with women and men—not for feeling and pleasure, but just to fill up time—and fond of lying around watching violent movies. He is the expression of the empty, vain principles that frame not only his 'royal' life, but also that of the society in which he lives. Despite being physically unpleasant, cynical and immoral, he receives the adoration of the people only because he holds power, and he is well aware of this. His detachment and violent coldness originate from this. I would be tempted to say that Kane has converted the misogyny of the original model into a more radical misanthropy, thus keeping the egotism of the mythic Hippolytus and ironically converting

141 See Marshall (2011) 166. Marshall's is one of the main studies on which I based my discussion. Other valuable contributions are from Urban (2001); McDonald (2002), 293–4; Klett (2003); Susanetti (2005) 270–1; Rubino (2008) 93–108.

142 Kane herself called this play "my comedy": Saunders (2002) 78.

his lack of interest in women and social relations into a detached, cold promiscuity. Kane's Hippolytus does not reject Phaedra; indeed, there is a physical relationship. But, he does not love her; she is like anyone else, one of the many. He has intercourse with his stepsister, too, Strophe, who also has had intercourse with her stepfather, Theseus, husband of her mother, on the very night of the wedding. Like her mythic ancestor, Kane's Phaedra is neglected by Theseus, and her passion for Hippolytus seems sincere. She actually seems the victim. In Kane's reworking, too, there is, at certain point, the 'traditional' accusation of rape, along with Phaedra's suicide. These happenings set in motion the events that will determine the complete, macabre decimation of the royal family. Hippolytus, nihilist as he is, refuses to defend himself from the false accusation. He is executed in public by his own father with the applause of the masses. While attempting to defend Hippolytus, Strophe, who is disguised, is publicly raped and killed by Theseus. After disemboweling his son, once he discovers that he has raped and killed his stepdaughter, Theseus cuts his own throat. And all this happens in front of a mob driven into a kind of frenzy by the king. That same mob, ready to believe in the accusation of rape against Hippolytus and to cut off his genitals as a punishment for a sex crime, then cheered for Theseus as he raped and killed Strophe in their midst! With this violence seeming purposeless, one wonders whether this is exactly the point of Kane's work, considering her intent to denounce social decay by commenting on the British Royal Family,¹⁴³ on the related behavior of the people, and on the modern trend of the masses to blindly adore celebrity. The point, perhaps, is that the moral void of the royal family has become the moral void of the entire state. Because of its 'brutalism', like all of Kane's plays, *Phaedra's Love* did not receive a warm welcome at its premiere in 1996. It has been staged only one other time in Britain, in 2005.

Phaedra comes back to be the center of the tragedy in the adaptation of the contemporary American playwright and novelist, Susan Yankowitz, *Phaedra in Delirium*, produced and first performed in 1998 by the Women's Project and Productions and the Classic Stage Company in New York City.¹⁴⁴ The set is very spare, yet evocative, in some way: a four-poster bed with canopy and curtains, with or without some mirrors. The bed stands on the center as an altar, the altar where the 'anatomy' of Phaedra's inner desire will be dissected. Giving Phaedra a more interior dimension, Yankowitz uses the 'confessional mode' in

143 See Saunders (2002) 75; also Susanetti (2005) 271, who mentions the Lady Diana-years' scandals.

144 See Friedman (1999); Svich (2005) 15; Yankowitz (2005). All quotations are from Svich (2005) 380–8.

rendering the dramatic conflicts of the woman. Phaedra delivers three confessions, all uttered in delirium. The first consists of an interior monologue that she shares with the audience, a kind of reflective soliloquy where she alludes to the history of her family's women who have been ruined by love, a history that keeps haunting her. She also 'confesses' her longing for the nostalgic memory of her youth, when she was a desirable and much desired woman. This Phaedra, presented as a woman in her forties, is both victim and pursuer: victim to the age and the mirror, rather than to her passion. Her pursuit of her stepson has as much to do with her own desire as a longing to recuperate a measure of youth. When she falls in love with Hippolytus, she sees in him the young Theseus. Like Seneca's Phaedra, her youthful longings are now roused by her son, who is so reminiscent of the young Theseus. This Phaedra reflects a gendered view of aging, as being a woman entrapped in a no-longer-young body that deprives her of the only power she knew. "So. *This* is how I'll escape old age" are her last words, uttered at the very moment in which she is about to hang herself. These words, too, prove, in a way, that aging is as much an obsession as her passion for Hippolytus. Chained to her bed as to her body, when not looking into a mirror, this Phaedra twists in the sheets, struggling with her conscience and lust. In this condition she delivers the second confession, which takes the form of a dialogue with her Friend, a substitute for the traditional nurse. This 'Friend', like the traditional nurse, urges Phaedra to save her life by speaking with Hippolytus, so that she can get rid of her obsession. The third confession is, in fact, her confession to Hippolytus. In front of his repugnance, she collapses. As in the original, so in this version, the 'speaking out' is the ultimate cause of the downfall. The introduction of this Friend is not the only innovation of this adaptation. Besides the innovative focus on the age-issue, the gender identity of this Friend reflects an interesting change in the role of the traditional nurse who, although tied to the mistress Phaedra, at certain point, plays the role of confidant or friend of Hippolytus, too, when she tries to 'convert' the youth to love (see, e.g., Seneca, *Phaedra* 435–82).¹⁴⁵ In Yankowitz's version the Friend is, indeed, an androgynous person of either gender, attendant of both Phaedra and Hippolytus, female 'confidante' of the first and male friend of the second. Dressed in shirt, pants and jacket, Friend has the hair tied back when with Hippolytus, and loose when with Phaedra, to thus signal the shift of gender identity linked to each character. A similar innovation, in terms of meaning-

145 In the way in which Yankowitz has shaped this character, I am also tempted to see a recall of the male servant, at the beginning of Euripides' *Hippolytus*: although he does not mean to convert his master to love, that servant does advise the youth to pay due respect to all the gods, including Aphrodite (ll. 88–105).

fully using one single actor for two roles, concerns the figure of Hippolytus and Theseus. Son and father, ascetic man and philanderer, both are designed to be performed by the same actor. This conception of Theseus and Hippolytus as twinned aspects of the same character is central to the theme of the drama, in that it emphasizes the age issue by considering the longing of Phaedra to regain her youth through loving Hippolytus, i.e., the young 'copy' of Theseus.¹⁴⁶ On a final note I would highlight the specifically modern touch of this adaptation: Phaedra's concern for her age, her blaming her own fading looks and a culture that idolizes youth as the cause both of her husband's neglect and of Hippolytus' rejection—all features that make this ancient tragedy peculiarly relevant to the modern, contemporaneous gendered obsession with keeping the body fit and young.

The 'power' of love in its dichotomous aspect, beautiful and hateful, as shown by the tragedies collected in this section, is the key theme of a more recent stage adaptation: *True Love* (2001) by the American playwright Charles Mee.¹⁴⁷ Through this play based on Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Racine's *Phèdre*, and Plato's *Symposium*, Mee aimed at exploring and discussing the nature of love in its many forms. The ancient works here serve rather as a vehicle; in particular, Euripides' *Hippolytus* suggests the passion of Mee's character Polly for her stepson, Edward, while Plato's *Symposium* suggests the quest for the nature of love.¹⁴⁸ For almost all the rest of this play Mee admittedly has moved far away from the ancient sources. The setting is a contemporaneous one: a gas station and a shabby motel. And contemporaneous is also the device through which Mee frames the whole story, yet in a way to echo Euripides' play: a radio talk show on the topic of love, which discusses the varied possibilities of this feeling, opens the play as Aphrodite, in Euripides, opens the drama setting out the events to come—love and death. The same radio talk show closes the play telling exactly the story of Polly/Phaedra and Edward/Hippolytus and suggesting that it might live on as subject of radio talk shows. This echoes Artemis's closure of the Euripidean drama with Artemis' promise that Phaedra' and Hippolytus' story will not be forgotten (*Hippolytus* 1429–30), i.e., will live on. As for Polly' and Edward's story itself, far differently from the

146 And I think that it is possible to easily identify the root of this 'twinning' mechanism in Seneca, *Phaedra* 646–50, where Phaedra points out Hippolytus' likeness to his father, when he was young.

147 About Charles Mee, see, also, above, e.g., pp. 34–5; 85–6; 249.

148 A detailed analysis, attentive to trace parallels and differences between Mee's adaptation and the ancient works is in Hartigan (2011) 89–108, to which my discussion is much in debt.

Greek model, the two do have a relationship which ends with a double death. But, this time, Hippolytus, i.e., Edward, survives. It is Polly/Phaedra who dies killed by her husband, Richard—the counterpart of Theseus—who discovered the stepmother' and stepson's affair. And, after the killing, it is the turn of Richard himself who commits suicide. Music was a crucial component of the stage performance of this play, in particular, and it was drawn from far different sources, from the Baroque composer George Friedric Hendel (18th century) to the 20th-century American singer Screamin' Jay Hawkins, with his 'hit' "I put a Spell on You" (1956), a homage to unrequited love. Particular emphasis was also given to visual images and words; there was, indeed, very little action in this play where the plot is rather secondary to what happens on stage. The public response to this production was generally positive, although—as suggested by one reviewer—the audience perhaps left the theatre still wondering "what is this thing called love?".¹⁴⁹

Screen

Hippolytus-tragedy has not met with notable cinematic reproductions, although the theme itself and the triangle-motif, deprived of all its original complexity and perhaps trivialized, might be identified in modern movie-stories. As far as I could ascertain, *Phaedra* (1962) by the American director Jules Dassin is the filmic adaptation of the original Greek play that deserves some attention. Based on a screenplay by the contemporaneous Greek writer Margarita Liberakis,¹⁵⁰ starring Dassin's wife, Melina Mercouri, as Phaedra, Raf Vallone as Thanos-Theseus, and Antony Perkins as Alexis-Hippolytus, this movie intertwines reality and myth. The main characters offer a quite overt allusion to some real public figures from the elite of the Greek society in the sixties, namely the wealthy shipowners Onassis (counterpart of Phaedra's natal family) and Niarchos (counterpart of Theseus' family), the new gods of the story. As is typical in Dassin's works, in this movie, too, the story is arranged so as to convey his concern with class conflict, where the upper class is seen as responsible for the lower class' sufferings. And the juxtaposition of the social classes gravitates around a ship called—I would say *ominously* called—*Phaedra*. This ship appears at the beginning, after the film's opening with the sound of a jet and a view of a bridge followed by a shot of the horse frieze from the Parthenon. After the credits against this background, we are introduced to the festivities for a dedication of a ship, i.e., Phaedra, named after the wife of the wealthy shipowner Thanos. The festive atmosphere is contrasted

149 Sommer (2001).

150 See McDonald (1983) 89–127; Rubino (2008) 67–73 (with special attention to the author's script, i.e., Margarita Liberaki).

with the appearance of sad and black-garbed women, the counterpart of the tragic chorus. They are the mothers and wives of the men who—as we come to know later—died in the sinking of the Phaedra-ship, off the coast of Norway. Brilliantly the director intertwines the ‘death’ of both Phaedras (the ship and the woman) at the end of the movie, when Phaedra reveals her passion for her stepson to Thanos. This revelation sets in motion the last actions that will lead to Phaedra’s disappearance by suicide in the same moment in which Thanos receives the news of the sinking of Phaedra-ship.¹⁵¹ The story resembles the core of the tragedy, but is also varied by several innovations in the characterization of the main personages, along with the addition of components that, as said, link the story to the reality of the Greek world in the sixties. Thanos-Theseus is devoted to his business to the point to constantly neglecting his wife, which is seen as a kind of justification for Phaedra’s fall. Phaedra is a woman in her forties who meets Alexis-Hippolytus upon a request of her husband to try to persuade the stepson, who is living in England, to join his father’s business in Greece. The first encounter takes place in the British Museum, not accidentally with Phaedra being beside a statue of Aphrodite and Alexis-Hippolytus standing near horses—an evident allusion at the passion and the beloved goddess of his mythic ancestor. Differently from the original, this Hippolytus is not misogynist and yields to the passion: he does have an affair with Phaedra. She explicitly declares her love, while her husband is away for business. This direct Phaedra might resemble rather the heroine of the first version of Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, and of some subsequent literary adaptations, as has been seen so far. Strangely enough, this Phaedra does not intend to fully pursue her love. She, in fact, does not intend to leave her husband for Alexis, who is horrified in front of Phaedra for the first time only when he witnesses how boldly she lies to his father. Phaedra and Thanos come back together in Greece, and, at first, Alexis refuses to join them for the summer. Phaedra actually asks him not to go. Upon the insistence of Thanos, Phaedra decides to intervene to persuade Alexis to go to Greece. She suggests that Thanos ‘bribe’ his son with a gift: a modern ‘horse’, i.e., the expensive Aston Martin car. This car becomes the true love and passion of Alexis. Once in Greece, events become complicated. Thanos proposes that his brother in law, i.e., the husband of Phaedra’s sister, Ariadni, join together with him as shipowners, arranging the wedding between their sons, i.e., Alexis and his step-cousin, Herse. It is now that Phaedra comes to realize, and has to admit, that she loves Alexis. Out of jealousy, she attempts to impede the arrangement and to take back Alexis. But the youth now rejects

151 The fatal end of the Phaedra-ship would echo a real event, i.e., the shipwreck of a Niarchos’ ship and the reaction of the women of the crew. This event indeed inspires Liberaki: see Rubino (2008) 67 and n. 2.

her. The problems continue. There is Phaedra's confession to Thanos of her love and the affair she had with the stepson. After leaving Thanos, she attempts again to persuade Alexis—who meanwhile has faced his angry father—to go away together. Rejected once again, Phaedra prepares for her death. She commits suicide with an overdose of pills. Thanos faces Alexis, beats him, and banishes him. Alexis, furious, takes his car, speeds away, and dies in a crash with a truck, which replaces the bull. With the car being a gift of Thanos, like the mythic Theseus, Thanos, too, remains co-responsible for the death of this not-so-innocent Alexis-Hippolytus. The two deaths (of Phaedra and Alexis) occur contemporaneously, against the background of the death of the men of the Phaedra-ship. In the moment in which Alexis' corpse is brought to Thanos, he also receives the list of the names of the dead, which must be communicated to the black-dressed women, mourning while they wait. Except for these women, the impression is that no character is really a sympathetic one. As for Phaedra, like in the myth, she is possessed by a deadly love, and everything she does backfires. Hers is a tragedy of timing. At first she does not leave Thanos for Alexis, since she is overwhelmed by the accepted social standards of jet-set mergers rather than marriages based on love. Later she rebels against these standards, when she decides to destroy her loveless marriage. But this rebellion is ill-timed in regard to Alexis. Alexis, who also seems to be more sympathetic than his mythic ancestor Hippolytus, might in the end have just one big 'fault': his youth. At a certain point, indeed, he appears more as a confused teenager than the old, experienced Phaedra has seduced in the first place. The movie turns the tragedy into a modern melodrama, and we are left without any scene of forgiveness and reconciliation. But the personal and the individual conflate in the collective and are put into perspective there. As mentioned, the deaths of Phaedra and Alexis take place as Thanos reads the name of the lost men who died in the wreck of the ship. The black-dressed women of the chorus show a genuine love. It is the love of the family for husbands and sons, a love that, in a way, contrasts with this modern Phaedra's love. The movie, which starts with a festive celebration scene, ends with mourning. This cycle is brilliantly visualized through Dassin's symbolic montage with fireworks (fire = life) at the beginning, and water (= death) at the end.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Hippolytus*

The reception of Euripides' *Hippolytus* has been receiving a good deal of attention beginning with the last decades of the 20th century, although the related scholarship is not as extensive as that concerning, for example, *Medea*

and *Trojan Women*. The impression is one of a fragmented scholarship, in that one finds several individual contributions to the understanding of the reception of this tragedy by a single specific writer, both ancient (*in primis* Seneca) and modern (e.g., *Racine*). But, there is not, at least not yet, a comprehensive treatment organized *per* period and/or *per* area, with only one exception, i.e., Grosse (2010). Grosse's essay is a well-organized work and represents a rich source. But being a chapter of a volume devoted to the reception of ancient myth as a whole, inevitably Grosse's treatment sometimes appears too concise, resembling rather a list of items with some description than a thorough study. However, this does not make it less valuable. Although to a minor degree, this can be said of some 'quick' summarizing discussions on the 'afterlife' of the tragedy in monographs devoted either to Euripides' *Hippolytus* itself, or to the already re-elaborated version in Seneca's *Phaedra*. This is the case with the chapter "The afterlife of Hippolytus" in Mills (2002) 109–130, and "Reception and Later Influence" in Mayer (2002) 75–88.

There are collections of essays resulting from conferences about either Euripides' *Hippolytus* or, more generically, the figure of Phaedra, held in different places, with some concentration in Europe. Such is the case, for instance, of two major proceedings from conferences held in Italy in the last decades of the 20th century and the first year of the new millennium: Uglicione (1985), and Degli Innocenti Pierini *et al.* (2007). Both collections, however, are not devoted exclusively to the reception study, given that there are contributions pertaining to specific aspects of the Greek play *per se*, in its own original context. A valuable collection of essays, focusing specifically on the reception of this tragedy, is the one edited by Pociña/López (2008). This is a quite extensive book articulated in two basic sections: the first one, "Fedras De Ayer," is organized chronologically from the ancient time to the Romantic Era; the second, "Fedras De Hoy", focuses on the 20th century and assembles various contributions on reception in poetry, theatre, and cinema.

There are also a few valuable collections of essays investigating the reception of the story and the figure of Phaedra with a focus on a specific geographic area: France. Worth mentioning are: W. Newton (1939) *Le Thème de Phèdre et Hippolyte dans la littérature française* ("The theme of Phaedra and Hippolytus in French Literature), and C. Francis (1967) *Les Métamorphoses de Phèdre dans la littérature française* ("The Metamorphoses of Phaedra in French Literature"), which goes through the rewritings of the story by French poets from the 16th century to the 20th.

More recently, and, perhaps, as a consequence of the different waves of feminism characterizing our age, with the tragedy being often re-elaborated by 'female hands', it is possible to track a related trend of 'female/feminist'

reception study of this Euripidean work. Two scholarly studies stand out: Rubino (2008), and Friedman (2009). While the first is concerned specifically with Phaedra, the second is a broader collection of critical descriptions of selected productions of classical plays, including the 'Hippolytus-Phaedra' one.

Although one could certainly not consider it strictly as a part of a history of the major scholarly works on the reception of this play, it might be interesting to note, at least as a 'signal of the time', i.e., of our high-tech, digital time, that the Hippolytus-Phaedra names and story has spread out on internet. According to a survey realized by Rubino on Google, up to 2008 there are about 913,000 websites named after Phaedra in 15,000 languages overall, including some 'exotic' ones, such as Chinese, Persian, and Armenian: Rubino (2008) 117 and n. 6.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

Literature

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Fine Arts

- Smoot, J. J. (1976) "Literary Criticism On a Vase-Painting: A Clearer Picture of Euripides' Hippolytus," *Comparative Literature Studies* 13.4: 292–303
- Taplin, O. (2007) *Pots & Plays. Interactions between Tragedy and Greek vase-painting of the Fourth Century BC*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum (pp. 108–65).

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- Campbell, P. A. (2010) "Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love*: Staging the Implacable," in Saunders, G./de Vos, L. (eds.) *Sarah Kane in Context*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 173–183.
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Other Resources

(General)

Bosher, K./Macintosh, F./McConnell, J./Rankine, P. D. (eds.) (2015) *The Oxford Handbook of Greek Drama in the Americas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (for a description, see above, pp. 94–5).

(Archive / Database)

Hall, E./Taplin, O. (1996–) Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD)¹⁵²

Princeton University (2013–2014): “Myth in Transformation: The Phaedra Project,” an initiative that brings together scholars, artists and students from Princeton, and engages with the diversity of creative and scholarly response to the myth. Material available at <http://www.princeton.edu/~phaedra/variations.theater.htm>.

Rubino (2008) 25: for a world widespread list of re-workings and adaptations of Hippolytus-Phaedra theme from early 20th- to early 21st century, through different media, including novel, theatre, cinema, dance.

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¹⁵² For a concise description, see above, p. 95.

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PART 4

Questioning Gods and Religion



Bacchant Women

Simon Perris

Of the surviving plays by Euripides, Bacchant Women (Greek Bakkhai/Bacchai; Latin Bacchae) beats all comers.¹ From Dionysus in disguise to the earthquake scene, the cross-dressing scene, Pentheus' gruesome death, and the god's devastating midair comeback, this exemplary yet one-of-a-kind play offers performers, writers, readers, and spectators a theatrical tour-de-force and—literally—a visceral experience. Agave carrying her son's decapitated head in her hands is, or should be, Euripidean drama's most potent image, her recognition its most poignant moment.

Bacchant Women remained justly famous throughout antiquity and beyond. Nevertheless, a long hiatus ensued, and the first recorded modern performance was not until 1908. By the 1960s, however, Bacchant Women had leapt onto Euripides' top-three greatest hits roster, whence it has not budged since. Dionysus is one factor, but many others have been suggested: sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll, revolution, ritual, etc. . . . In fact, Bacchant Women has enjoyed an afterlife so extensive and varied that it is now a cipher for numerous contemporary preoccupations. Just like its patron deity, Bacchant Women contains multitudes. Reduced to bare essentials, however, it dramatizes a violent episode in which human beings hurt, maim, and kill another human for no good reason and the gods do not lift a finger to help. Setting aside abstractions such as “the irrational” or “the Dionysiac,” violence endures.

The story unfolds before Pentheus' palace in Thebes. Dionysus has returned from the East to his birthplace, disguised as a priest of “Dionysus”. He brings a chorus of female worshippers (Bacchae). The old king Cadmus and the prophet Tiresias prepare to dance for Dionysus. Pentheus, Cadmus' grandson and de facto ruler of Thebes, mocks them; the chorus sings of his hybris (ll. 1–433). Pentheus has the captured foreigner (i.e., Dionysus) locked up; the chorus sings (ll. 434–575). An earthquake shakes the palace. Meanwhile, Pentheus suffers a delusional episode offstage, described by Dionysus; Pentheus enters and interacts with Dionysus

1 Thanks are due to the following people and organizations, in no particular order, for their contributions to this chapter: Joel Gordon; the Victoria University of Wellington Joint Research Committee; Oliver Taplin; Mark Masterson; Fiachra Mac Góráin; Courtney Friesen; Joshua Billings; David Bullen; Arthur Pomeroy; James Kierstead; Rosanna Lauriola.

again. Messenger 1 reports that the women of Thebes have gone wild, tearing cattle apart, plundering villages, and repulsing armed attackers. Dionysus now persuades Pentheus to go inside and don women's clothing; the chorus celebrates Dionysiac religion and traditional piety (ll. 576–91). Dionysus and Pentheus (now in drag and again delusional) finish preparing and embark on their mission; the chorus hope for Pentheus' downfall (ll. 912–1023). Messenger 2 announces that still under Dionysus' influence, the Theban women have torn Pentheus limb from limb (ll. 1024–1164). Agave (Pentheus' mother) then brings Pentheus' head, thinking it that of a lion cub. Cadmus and his attendants, however, bring Pentheus' remains, and Cadmus slowly draws Agave out of her reverie. She then recomposes Pentheus' body and joins Cadmus in mourning him. Dionysus appears as a god, probably on the stage-building roof. He arranges his new cult in Thebes, prophesies Cadmus' future trials and afterlife, then chastises father and daughter. They separate and go into exile (ll. 1165–end).²

In Literature

Bacchant Women may not be the most popular Greek tragedy or even the most popular Euripidean drama, but its reception is more wide-ranging, diverse, nuanced, difficult, and (dare I say) interesting than that of any other ancient play. As a result, mapping its afterlife is a bit like tracking an invisible shape-shifter on a city-wide crime spree. The trail of snatched necklaces and broken windows gives us a fair idea of what is happening, but absolute certainty hovers just beyond reach. All in all, this most mercurial of dramas resists interpretative straitjackets with a vengeance, prodding and pushing the premises, principles, and practices of classical reception studies even as it remains a staple of classics and reception.

Writers and readers throughout antiquity and beyond knew and (apparently) liked *Bacchant Women* well, and they have left us a smorgasbord of anecdotes to pick over. The Greek polymath Plutarch (ca. 45–125 AD) quotes it regularly, and in general “it was widely quoted and excerpted in the Roman period”.³ Others, somehow, saw the funny side: the Athenian philosopher Plato (428/7–348/7 BC) and the Hellenistic poet Callimachus (4th–3rd century BC) are known to have quoted *Bacchant Women* to humorous effect, while the rhetorical-satirical writer Lucian (ca. 120–190 AD) skewers an “uneducated person”

2 The manuscripts of *Bacchant Women* are missing substantial portions of this last section, especially (1) Agave's lament over Pentheus' body and (2) Dionysus' entry.

3 Dodds (1960) xxix n. 1.

for reciting badly from a copy of *Bacchant Women* (*Against an Ignorant Book Collector* 19).⁴

The play also provided material for serious adaptation. The Hellenistic poet Theocritus (3rd century BC) replays the death of Pentheus in *Idyll* 26.⁵ The Augustan poet Vergil (70–19 BC) famously borrowed from it in a description of Dido, queen of Carthage, raving after her rejection by Aeneas of Troy: “Like mad Pentheus, Dido sees the ranks of Eumenides, / a double sun, and two Thebes appear” (*Aeneid* 4. 469–70; see *Bacchant Women* 918–9).⁶

We also know of large-scale adaptations. The Roman tragedian Pacuvius (220–ca. 130 BC) wrote a *Pentheus* partly based on *Bacchant Women*. His successor Accius (b. 170 BC) adapted Euripides’ play closely into a Latin *Bacchant Women*. Even the epic poet Statius (1st century AD) wrote a pantomime libretto entitled *Agave*. More subtly, the Roman comedian Plautus (3rd/2nd century BC) offers “a comic response to the metatragic possibilities he saw in the *Bacchae*” in his *Amphitruo*.⁷ Vergil, too, may also have modelled the entire second half of the *Aeneid* on the play.⁸ And of course the Augustan poet Ovid (43 BC–AD 17) and the Imperial Greek poet Nonnus (5th century AD) wrote substantial versions of the Pentheus episode in the *Metamorphoses* and *Dionysiaca* respectively.⁹

Judaeo-Christian writers likewise sought inspiration in this most pagan of Athenian dramas. 3 Maccabees, for example, “demonstrates some suggestive affinities” with *Bacchant Women*.¹⁰ It may have influenced the New Testament books of Luke and Acts, and later Christian writers, most famously the Christian philosopher Clement of Alexandria (2nd–3rd century AD), paid it serious attention.¹¹ Even after its theatrical shelf-life was over, *Bacchant Women* managed to find its way into Byzantine historiography and biography. The chronicler Ioannes Malalas (ca. 500–575 AD) rationalizes it into secular political history (*Chronographia* 41. 4–45. 10), while a Byzantine encyclopedia

4 Plato: Diogenes Laertius 2.78. Callimachus: *Palatine Anthology* 6.310.

5 See below, pp. 510–1.

6 Other Latin writers who allude briefly to *Bacchant Women* include Catullus, Propertius, Horace, Seneca, Tacitus, Valerius Flaccus, Statius, and the author of the pseudo-Vergilian *Culex* (“Mosquito”), a short epic poem.

7 Pacuvius: Servius on *Aeneid* 4. 469. Accius: Rosato (2005). Statius: Juvenal, *Satire* 7.86–8. Plautus: Slater (2001) 201. Among Greek dramatists, Chaeremon (4th century BC) composed a *Dionysus* and Lycophron (3rd century BC) a *Pentheus*.

8 Mac Góráin (2013).

9 See below, pp. 510–1.

10 Cousland (2001) 539.

11 MacDonald (2015) 11–66; Friesen (forthcoming).

records a ridiculous anecdote about Euripides' death which clearly derives from his final masterpiece: "Others claim that it was not by dogs but by women that he was torn apart".¹² In short, *Bacchant Women* was one of the great master-texts of the ancient world.

It is thus worth reviewing the three most substantial extant adaptations from antiquity, by Theocritus, Ovid, and Nonnus. Theocritus' *Idyll* 26, a short poem sub-titled "Bacchae" (and the earliest extant adaptation), rewrites the death of Pentheus as a public-service warning against impiety. Ovid's "Pentheus and Bacchus" (*Metamorphoses* 3. 511–733) replays it as a violent, (amphi)theatrical spectacle.¹³ Nonnus' "Pentheid" (*Dionysiaca*, books 44–46) turns Euripides' tragedy into a heroic *epyllion*.

Theocritus' *Idyll* 26 adapts (some of) *Bacchant Women*, assumes knowledge of the wider myth as dramatized in the play, and also alludes to Euripides' text. Line 26, for example, clearly echoes *Bacchant Women* 367, punning on *Pentheus* and *penthos* ("mourning"): "Pentheus (Πενθεύς) had better not bring mourning (*penthos*, πένθος) to this house." Unlike Euripides' messenger, however, Theocritus' narrator raises the violence stakes by describing Pentheus' decapitation and specifying that it was indeed Agave who tore off the head: "His mother ripped off her son's head and bellowed" (Theocritus, *Idyll* 26. 20). Ovid follows suit, decapitation being a fate worse than (regular) death for Roman men: she "pulled off the head (*avulsumque caput*) and held it in bloody hands" (*Metamorphoses* 3. 725–7).¹⁴ Moreover, though obviously related to *Bacchant Women*, Ovid's version also includes other material; Ovid may have drawn on a lost Latin source. In contrast, Nonnus' "Pentheid" does in fact read as an adaptation specifically of Euripides' *Bacchant Women*: that is, as a tragedy-length hexameter rewriting of a tragedy. The whole of the play's plot is present and accounted for, more or less; as in Theocritus' *Idyll* 26, echoes of Euripides' Greek resound. One especially playful allusion echoes not merely the words, but also the style, of a memorable line from *Bacchant Women* which describes Dionysus (in disguise) miraculously bending a tall tree down to the ground with his hands. In Euripides: "He grabbed the sky-high top branch / and dragged it, dragged it, dragged it down to the dark earth" (*Bacchant Women* 1064–5). And in Nonnus: "He squeezed the top of the tree with a steady hand / and dragged it down to the ground, down to the ground" (*Dionysiaca* 46. 152–3). One even discovers the precise mechanism by which Agave decapitated her

12 *Suda*, "Euripides".

13 Hinds (2002) 139.

14 Bömer (1969) on *Metamorphoses* 3. 727. Cf. Tacitus, *Historiae* 2. 49 (Otho) and Vergil, *Aeneid* 2. 558 (Priam).

son: "His confused mother set her foot against her son's chest and, as he lay there, sliced through his brash neck with a sharp *thyrsos*" (*Dionysiaca* 46. 214–6).

Each of these works thus manipulates the reader's perceptions of *Bacchant Women*, of Dionysus and Pentheus, and of *sparagmos* ("tearing apart"). Theocritus' narrator sides with Dionysus: Cadmus' daughters performed a "noble deed under Dionysus' urging", and readers are exhorted not to "criticize the gods' actions" (26. 37–8). Theocritus' *Idyll* 26 is thus a revisionist rereading of *Bacchant Women* which can profitably be read as a metapoetic corrective for those who apparently misunderstood Euripides' theology first time around.¹⁵ Ovid's Bacchus (Dionysus), by contrast, is not one of the good guys, and "Pentheus and Bacchus" doubles down on violence and torture. The maenads' *manibus . . . nefandis* ("criminal hands", 3. 731) project the reaction of "sober, rational Romans" to the "latent tendency towards ecstatic violence".¹⁶ Nonnus, finally, vilifies Pentheus and makes Dionysus the people's champion, brave yet merciful.¹⁷

From the 6th century AD, *Bacchant Women* steadily dropped off the cultural-artistic radar along with the rest of Greek tragedy, ultimately surviving as a classic text to be read and studied rather than a play to be performed or adapted.¹⁸ The only surviving exception proves that rule: a 12th-century (?) AD play entitled *Christus Patiens* ("Suffering Christ", in Greek *Khristos Paskhôn*). *Christus Patiens* is a passion play about the crucifixion, but it is also a cento: a text wholly or, in this case, mostly, patched together from quotations. It leans heavily on Euripides and on *Bacchant Women* most of all, and it remains a crucial witness for lost portions of *Bacchant Women*.

Christus Patiens can be read as a sophisticated literary reworking: it translates Greek tragedy from the metatheatrical and metaphysical realms to the theological, maps both Pentheus and Dionysus onto Christ, and ultimately tests the limits of Christian tragedy.¹⁹ But *Christus Patiens* is an outlier, not a forerunner. Although faint echoes of *Bacchant Women* have been heard in the *General Estoria* ("General History") of Alphonso X, King of Castile (1252–1284); the 14th-century *Ovide Moralisé* ("Ovid Moralized"); and *Grisel y Mirabella* ("Grisel and Mirabella"), by Spanish diplomat and author Juan de Flores (ca. 1455–ca. 1525); these authors relied on Ovid's Latin, not Euripides' Greek,

15 Hunter (2006) 47.

16 Fratantuono (2011) 82.

17 See, e.g., *Dionysiaca* 44. 17, 44. 50, 46. 352–5, 46. 356–9.

18 Garland (2004) 80–1.

19 Friesen (forthcoming).

in Juan de Flores' case, on a 1494 Catalan translation of the *Metamorphoses*.²⁰ The first printed edition of *Bacchant Women* dates to 1503, and I know of no recorded Latin translation (let alone a vernacular one) before 1541.²¹ In any case, translation seems to have made little difference to its fortunes at this time.

The French Renaissance poet Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585) is a special case. He learned Latin and Greek; he read widely in the classics, presumably including *Bacchant Women*; and he wrote a number of poems on Dionysiac themes. His most important source for these poems, however, was the *Hymnus Baccho* ("Hymn to Bacchus"), by the Neo-Latin poet Marullus.²² The most that we can say is that Ronsard occasionally turned to *Bacchant Women* as inspiration for Dionysiac poetry. "It would be worse than idle to look for any consistent parallelism between the tragedy of the *Bacchae* and the Bacchic jollifications of Ronsard's poems."²³

It was not until the 20th century that *Bacchant Women* was again a major literary phenomenon. This time, translation did play a starring role.²⁴ *Bacchant Women* was first published in English, as part of a complete set of Euripides translations, in 1781–1783 by the poet and cleric Robert Potter (1721–1804), and in 1782 by the poet and book collector Michael Wodhull (1740–1816); in German by the poets Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) and Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), in part and in full respectively; and by numerous Victorian imitators. But it was the 1902 translation by the Australian-born English classicist Gilbert Murray (1866–1957) which put the play back on the map. Since then, English translation has both reflected and influenced some of the most important modern developments in the understanding of Dionysus and of *Bacchant Women*.

Murray's *Bacchant Women* was integral to the first recorded modern professional production of the play in 1908, and it also influenced later adaptations such as *Major Barbara*, by the Irish playwright and critic George Bernard

20 Hernández de la Fuente (2014) 665–8.

21 Schleiner (1990) 31 n. 11. See also Chevalier (2013) 46–7. Other early Latin translations of *Bacchae*, also from complete sets or selections, include one by Coriolano Martirano (1556) and another by Philip Melanchthon (1558). Unfortunately, the ongoing *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin translations and commentaries: annotated lists and guides* (1960–) does not yet include an entry for Euripides: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.06109.0001.001>.

22 Silver (1981) 160 n. 66.

23 Silver (1981) 156.

24 This section, on translation, ruthlessly condenses much of Perris (forthcoming), which draws on Perris (2008) and (2012).

Shaw (1856–1950).²⁵ Perhaps surprisingly, Murray translates Euripides' thoroughly religious, thoroughly pagan text into a secular passion play about the "Kingdom of Heaven within us"—about finding happiness, peace, and justice right here on earth:

But whoe'er can know,
As the long days go,
That to Live is happy, hath found his Heaven!²⁶

Murray describes Greek religion using Christian phraseology: "Son of God", "Spirit of God", "Heaven", "Glorying to God in the height", "true God", and so on. He introduces Scriptural imagery such as the sower and the seed. Finally, Murray interprets Dionysus with Christian theological concepts, including the trinity, the passion, salvation, and even the Eucharist:

Yea, being God, the blood of him is set
Before the Gods in sacrifice, that we
For his sake may be blest.²⁷

Literati such as Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888–1965) roundly criticized Murray's archaizing style, but his reinterpretation of *Bacchant Women*, not to mention his willingness to take the much-maligned Euripides seriously as a playwright, poet, and thinker, was thoroughly modern.

Of genuinely Modern poets, however, only H. D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886–1961) published a translation of *Bacchant Women* in whole or part: *Choros Translations from The Bacchae* (1931). Of her part-translations of tragedy, *From the Iphigeneia in Aulis of Euripides* is more famous, and justly so.²⁸ In the *Bacchant Women* sequence, the concrete momentum of H. D.'s verse dissolves in insipid mysticism:

I count
mysterious,
mystical happiness,
this one
who finds

²⁵ See below, pp. 533–4.

²⁶ Murray (1904) 53.

²⁷ Murray (1904) 19.

²⁸ On Hilda Doolittle's *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, see above, p. 20.

day by day,
 hour by hour,
 mysterious,
 mystical,
 not to be spoken
 bliss.²⁹

Perhaps *Bacchant Women* and high Modernism were just not meant to be together.³⁰

The next significant entry in the ledger dates from 1991, when Northern Irish poet Derek Mahon (1941–) livened things up by translating *Bacchant Women* as a (self-)parody. In Mahon's words, the aim was to "put the fun back into Greek tragedy" and "knock [Seamus Heaney's] *The Cure at Troy* into a cocked hat."³¹ Dionysus' entry says it all: "My name is Dionysus, son of Zeus / and Semele, Cadmus' eldest daughter. Whoosh! [...] She lived here / till—pow!—the place was blown to bits by Hera, / the jealous bitch."³² Mahon parodies three targets throughout: (1) Euripides' original, (2) Irish drama, and (3) political readings of the classics. In doing so, he repudiates any sort of false hope, eschews didactic metatheatre, and adopts an anti-political stance. At the end of the translation, in emphatic final position *after* the choral tag, Mahon interpolates an earlier choral lyric—now a reprise. This reprise deflects serious political allegory by way of the song "As Time Goes By", from *Casablanca*:

What pleases best, what grand
 gift can the gods bestow
 more than the conquering hand
 over the fallen foe?
 It's still the same old story,
 a fight for love and glory,
 and every heart admits that this is so!

Mahon's fun (yet far from frivolous) *Bacchant Women* went unperformed until 2002.³³ That same year also saw a thoroughly serious translation by the Irish

29 H. D. (1984) 229.

30 See, however, Spears (1970).

31 Interview with Eve Patten in *Rhinoceros* 3 (1990), quoted in McDonald (1995) 201; Scammell (1991) 6.

32 Mahon (1990) 11.

33 *Bacchae*, directed by Spencer Butler; Questors Theatre, London, 13 April–20 April 2002.

playwright Colin Teevan (1968–) for a National Theatre production directed by Peter Hall (1930–). Teevan's translation insists throughout on its own relevance, seriousness, and scholastic heft.³⁴ Overall, Teevan stage-manages a reconciliation between East and West brought about by the curative powers of a new (old) religion, namely theatre. For example, two entirely invented passages use ponderous metatheatre to frame the ancient text, at the beginning and ending, as a drama for the ages and Dionysus as its hero. From the prologue:

An empty space and all of you, and me.
 And who am I? Dionysus son of Zeus;
 God of the vine, god of dramatic rites,
 God of the transformation from the humdrum
 To the wild abandon of the play.
 So let us play, so let us beat the drum.
 [...]

 So that I might suspend the disbelief
 Of all who dare not believe in me.
 Let's play, I said. Look and you'll begin to see.³⁵

From Dionysus' reappearance at the end:

And you? Was not your disbelief suspended?
 Just a bit?
 I can conjure worlds in the imagination and destroy those worlds.³⁶

Equally egregious are the references to 9/11 sprinkled throughout the text. Teevan liberally scatters the phrases "the East", "the West", "the Western world", "wide streets of the West", and even "our city in the West"—London, presumably, or New York.³⁷ Dionysus returns to "where the city ends and the wild begins, / A place poised between two worlds", insisting that "Race matters to this god not a lot."³⁸ In the end, Teevan's translation offers theatre as the new, non-violent religion which can save the world from terrorism.

By contrast, Scottish playwright David Greig (1969–) showed an almost unbearable lightness of touch in his 2007 translation for the Scottish National

34 Teevan's translation is entitled *Bacchai*.

35 Teevan (2002) 17.

36 Teevan (2002) 68, also 70.

37 Teevan (2002) 18, 20, 28, 35, 36.

38 Teevan (2002) 34, 17.

Theatre. On the one hand, Greig worked from a literal crib and aimed squarely at authenticity: “So, I thought: I will not do anything creative to the play; I won’t change any units of meaning.”³⁹ Headings in the text mark formal divisions with Aristotelian terms: PROLOGUE, PARADOS [*sic*], THE FIRST EPISODE, THE FIRST STASIMON, and so on. Although the title is *The Bacchae*, Greig maintains Greek transliteration throughout for “Bakkhai,” “Bakkhos,” “Bakkhant,” “Bakkhic,” and even, with impressive consistency, “Bakkhically”. On the other hand, Greig also coins Scottish tongue-twisters from otherwise unexceptional Greek phrases: “used Zeus as an excuse”; “Bakkhic bondage blunder”.⁴⁰

Semiotic overload animates the translation, and Greig throws everything but the kitchen sink at *Bacchant Women*, some of which sticks and some of which does not: sex, camp, metatheatre, comedy, psycho-analysis, and so on. For example:

Tragic.
 Poor Pentheus, you’re such a star,
 But you have no idea how
 Tragic you really are. You’re
 About to walk into a scene
 Of suffering so horrible
 So awful, so cruel, so terrible,
 Your story will be heard in heaven.
 A tragedy. Your name in lights
 For ever.⁴¹

Greig’s notionally “authentic” *Bacchant Women* (which includes a substantial amount of invented material) offers a metapoetic exhortation to submit to the god of the 21st century, that is, Dionysus, “the Scream” (in Greek: *Bromios*, “Roarer”):

No—you can’t choose the gods that you worship.
 So you must learn to sing
 You must sing this hymn
 This hymn to the Scream.
 Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.⁴²

39 David Greig, from the programme to the National Theatre of Scotland production, directed by John Tiffany at the King’s Theatre, Edinburgh, August 2007.

40 Greig (2007) 9, 40.

41 Greig (2007) 62–3.

42 Greig (2007) 88.

English translations of *Bacchant Women* thus form a microcosm of modern reinterpretation: secular humanism, Imagism, parody, postcolonialism, and radical authenticity. As we will see, indicators point to a decadent phase in the reception of *Bacchant Women*.

Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) brought Dionysus unparalleled fame. In its wake followed a semi-regular succession of what one might call "Dionysiac fictions".⁴³ And yet, despite the pall cast by Dionysus over the long 20th century, surprisingly few works of fiction engage with the play *per se*.⁴⁴

The earliest, and best, fictional adaptation of *Bacchant Women* was *Lord of the Flies* (1954), by English Nobel Prize winner William Golding (1911–1993). Golding's timeless fable of shipwrecked schoolboys gone feral is read by many (including the author) as a response to *The Coral Island* (1858), a juvenile fiction classic by the Scottish author R. M. Ballantyne (1825–1894) about three boys shipwrecked on a South Pacific island; and as a damning indictment of *homo sapiens'* violent instincts.⁴⁵ Whereas *The Coral Island* presents a remarkably optimistic narrative, in which good Christian boys bring civilisation to the South Pacific, *Lord of the Flies* depicts young boys killing each other, literally, in the absence of adult supervision. But external and internal evidence also supports reading *Lord of the Flies* as a response to the influential 1944 edition of *Bacchant Women* by the English classicist E. R. Dodds (1893–1979).⁴⁶ Speaking about his debt to Euripides, Golding said: "Of course I knew [*Bacchant Women*], and at the time of writing [*Lord of the Flies*] knew Dodds's magnificent edition better than my own hand. *But one work does not come from another unless it is stillborn.*"⁴⁷

Jack Merridew ("merry dew" = wine), represents Dionysus. Ralph and Piggy between them represent Pentheus (respectively youth, authority, and order; and rationalism, scepticism, and vulnerability). Plot elements include hunting, animal sacrifice, Dionysiac *thiasos*, orgiastic music, cross-dressing, and

43 See, e.g., Carlevale (2006); Hernández de la Fuente (2014) 679. Examples: Walter Pater, "Denys L'Auxerrois" ("Denys of Auxerre", 1886); Julio Cortázar, "Las Ménades" ("The Maenads"), from *Final del juego* ("End of the Game", 1956); Roderick Thorp, *Dionysus* (1969); Xavier Roca-Ferrer, *Cap de Penteu* ("Pentheus' Head," 1993); Mario Vargas Llosa, *Lituma en los Andes* ("Death in the Andes," 1993); Luca di Fulvio, *La scala di Dioniso* ("The Ladder of Dionysus," 2005).

44 Some readers detect faint traces in Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* ("Death in Venice," 1912), Fowles' *The Magus* (1965; 1977), and Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (1967). See, e.g., Moss (1996); Shookman (2003).

45 Kermode/Golding (1959) 9.

46 Dick (1964); Roncace (1997). The first edition of Dodds (1960) appeared in 1944.

47 Dick (1965) 481. Golding (1958) 43; the stage directions for *The Brass Butterfly* indicate that Mamillius knows *Bacchae* from memory.

violence. The story, finally, proceeds in tandem with *Bacchant Women*: a series of escalating encounters between diametrically opposed but also similar protagonists (Jack and Ralph) representing two cultures; a breakdown of order culminating in violence (the death of a quasi-prophetic character named Simon and the death of Piggy); and a *deus ex machina* (the naval officer). Jack, for example, enters leading a literal chorus: a boys' choir.⁴⁸ Simon suffers *sparagmos*:

The beast [Simon] struggled forward, broke the ring and fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws.⁴⁹

Following Dodds' lead, *Lord of the Flies* depicts what happens when the irrational subconscious is no longer contained, when the "human condition" is allowed to become more than a euphemism. *The Coral Island* supplies the premise, *Bacchant Women* the answer.

Three other novels interact substantively and directly with the play. Although these interactions are in close-up as compared to the wide-angle, allegorical lens of *Lord of the Flies*, the focus remains squarely on violence and the irrational. The first such example is *The Mask of Apollo* (1966), by the English historical novelist Mary Renault (1905–1983). Set in the mid-4th century BC, *The Mask of Apollo* (1966) tells the story of Nikeratos, a travelling actor who becomes involved in the struggle for Syracuse between the tyrant Dionysius II and his uncle Dion (and also involving Plato). The opening paragraphs in fact refer to *Bacchant Women*: Nikeratos recounts how his own father died of a chill caught while performing the play, after which Nikeratos himself joined a travelling troupe.⁵⁰ More egregiously, a later passage depicts Nikeratos producing and playing the lead role in a command performance of *Bacchant Women* at Syracuse, for Dionysius II. Nikeratos—and Renault—understand the play:

It is a play about mystery, and a mystery in itself.

[...]

But one cannot take this deity with the head; that, I suppose, is what the play is about.⁵¹

48 Golding (1954) 15–6.

49 Golding (1954) 169.

50 Renault (1966) 1. Other references at 136, 143–53.

51 Renault (1966) 143, 146.

Nikeratos' detailed narrative amounts to a director's notes on the production, written with Dodds' commentary open on the desk. In sum, *The Mask of Apollo* takes Euripides' play as an archetypal, classic tragedy worthy of regular reperformance, but also an archetypal interpretative enigma worthy of regular contemplation.

Renault's primary intertext is not Euripides but Plato. In fact, other writers compare and contrast Plato and *Bacchant Women* as interventions in the history of violence. *The Secret History* (1992), for example, by American Pulitzer Prize winner Donna Tartt (1963–), is a college novel, a potboiling "whydunnit", a novel of ideas spiced with classical references, and an adaptation (of sorts) of *Bacchant Women*. At a fictional Vermont college, an oddball professor teaches a close-knit group of Classics students about (*inter alia*) Dionysus. Some of the friends form a *thiasos*, conduct a ritual, and eventually 'see' Dionysus. In the process, however, they accidentally kill a local man by tearing him apart barehanded, then conspire to murder another friend who threatens to reveal the earlier death. *The Secret History* is especially taken with Dodds. The epigraph for Part II comes from *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951).⁵² In one sequence, the Classics professor, Julian, draws on not only Plato's *Phaedrus*, but also *The Greeks and the Irrational* and Dodds' *Bacchant Women* commentary, to flesh out a definition of Dionysian madness:

It is dangerous to ignore the existence of the irrational. The more cultivated a person is, the more intelligent, the more repressed, then the more he needs some method of channelling the primitive impulses he's worked so hard to subdue.

[...]

Euripides speaks of the Maenads: head thrown back, throat to the stars, 'more like deer than human being.'⁵³

Euripides wrote nothing of the sort, but one catches Julian's drift. In this and other passages, Tartt turns to *Bacchant Women* to illustrate Dionysus' power. Thus, as in *Lord of the Flies*, *Bacchant Women* provides a model for telling a story—a fable—about irrational violence. But unlike Golding, Tartt readily inserts the hypotext into the story: *The Secret History* is both about Dodds' *Bacchant Women* and based on it.

The Cuban-born Spanish novelist José Carlos Somoza (1959–) intertwines these threads of violence, the irrational, Plato, and Euripides in *La caverna de las ideas* ("The Cave of Ideas," 2000), a highly reflexive, metatextual,

52 Tartt (1992) 273.

53 Tartt (1992) 42.

postmodern historical novel. In the present, the narrator is translating a purportedly authentic ancient Greek text, titled *The Athenian Murders*. He is eventually captured, and his footnotes reveal a metatextual murder mystery within a story within a story. As in *The Mask of Apollo*, Euripides is far less prominent than, say, Plato. Yet he is still present, so to speak:

The brotherhood [of Dionysus] is Thracian in origin, but it now operates mainly in Macedonia. Did you know that Euripides, the celebrated poet, belonged to it in his final years? [...] He drank *kyon* and was killed by other cult members [...]⁵⁴

In *The Athenian Murders*, a 4th-century sleuth traces a series of deaths to a secret Dionysiac cult, one member of which, Tramachus, volunteered to suffer *sparagmos*. Itys, his mother, did as Agave had done: “I was the first to sink my nails into his chest”.⁵⁵ *Bacchant Women* then becomes a quasi-scriptural proof-text which supports irrational, ritualistic violence:

[...] At Archelaus’ court, Euripides witnessed the rites of Lykaion, and was transformed. He wrote a play, a tragedy, quite unlike his previous work—*Bacchantes*, in praise of fury, dance and orgiastic pleasure. He intended it to repay his debt to primitive theatre, which belongs to Dionysus [...]⁵⁶

In effect, Somoza has picked up the tune from *The Secret History* and embedded the classical hypotext in the modern text. Even speculative fiction (SF) has joined in: Hal Duncan’s *Ink* (2007) features characters performing *Bacchant Women* in a pseudo-medieval setting. For a small group of bookish novelists, therefore, *Bacchant Women* has offered a canonical, authoritative literary guide to the darker corners of the human condition.

The most obvious and most recent novelization, however, is also the weakest and most derivative: the less said about *Dionysus in New York* (2008), by retired New York State Supreme Court Justice Nicholas Clemente (1929–2009), the better. Constantine “Dion” Bacchus, a half-Greek and half-Native-American faith healer (and mortal incarnation of Dionysus), embarks on a speaking tour. Dion plans to have his arch-enemy, New York mayor Horace Penney, killed by his own mother at a public rally. In the end, however, Dion himself dies at the

54 Somoza (2002) 296.

55 Somoza (2002) 278.

56 Somoza (2002) 296–7, also 155.

rally when his totem pole (filled with champagne) is broken. After death, he finds himself in Olympus, destined to woo Athena!

As for prose, so for verse. Dionysus has continued to supply grist for the worldwide poetry mill, from *Dionizje* ("Dionysiacs", 1922), by the Polish writer Jaroław Iwaszkiewicz (1894–1980), to *Dionysus Crucified* (2011), by English poetry professor Simon Jarvis. On a smaller scale, modern poets have responded to *Bacchant Women* as well, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. One finds four general modes of poetic reception: (1) tentative allusions, such as in the laconic poem *Pentheus* (1954), by Greek Nobel Prize winner George Seferis (1900–1971); (2) brief mentions, as in the long poem *Tiresias* (1871), by the English writer Charles Swinburne (1837–1909); (3) shorter narratives in the Theocritean tradition; and (4) longer narratives in the Ovidian/Nonnan tradition.

This last category includes both the insufferable narrative poem *The Conquest of Thebes* (1909), by the American poet Richard Edwin Day (1852–1936), and the rather more effective narrative poem *The Women on Cythæron* (1928), by the American poet Robinson Jeffers (1887–1962). These longer works wring poetic effect from the narrative, but the shorter lyrics tend to ponder what happens next. The poem *Bacchæ* (1958), for example, by English poet Thomas Blackburn (1916–1977), uses controlled stanzas and occasional rhyme to retell *Bacchant Women*. In the final stanza, however, the poem hones in on Agave's felt experience:

But when that stricken, mumbling queen,
Limped homeward with her son's pale head
And recognition rinsed her brain,
Was it as Danae's golden shower,
And she the matrix of the god,
To bear his knowledge with her pain?
Or did she seek her dusty thread
And pick the stitches up again?⁵⁷

Bacchant Women thus tends to elicit a mournful, resigned poetics. The American poet Donald Finkel (1929–2008), for example, embarks on a loose retelling in *Chorus of the Drunken Women* (1959): "Pentheus, well-bred, / If a trifle stupid [...] juggled the wine-wild women, / Their soft god."⁵⁸ But the narrator concludes with a turn—a *volta*—to the present:

57 Blackburn (1975) 13.

58 Finkel (1959) 130.

In the city, no king, winter,
 The wild vine clipped and raw. Death
 Is for the living, we are the body,
 We bleed where the limbs are fallen.

Agave in the West (1961), by Donald Davie (1922–1995), which is really about what it means to be an English writer (and member of The Movement) abroad, bathetically compares visiting the U.S.A. to Agave's exile:

I like the sidewalks of an American city,
 Broad shadowed stone. I think of Agave,
 Queen of the maenads, after incestuous fury
 Shocked and quiescent, pleading for the cage:
 Grids of a rectilinear plot, her cities.⁵⁹

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

Archaic and Classical vase painters frequently painted Dionysus. They also sometimes painted Pentheus' death, such as the bloody scene on an Attic red-figure cup attributed to the Greek vase painter Douris (5th century BC).⁶⁰ But Euripides' play, as opposed to the myth in general, has been convincingly identified on only one Greek vase: an Apulian *phiale* (bowl) dated to around 350 BC, probably depicting Pentheus fighting off maenads.⁶¹ Moreover, although *Bacchant Women* popularized the myth of Pentheus, late Classical artists apparently preferred to concentrate on the moments *before* his death.

The House of the Vettii in Pompeii preserves a well-known example in a wall painting on the east wall of *triclinium* (dining room) N, from around AD 65. The central image depicts two maenads attacking Pentheus, heroically nude except for a billowing cloak, who has dropped his spear, sunk to one knee, and stretched out his hand in supplication.⁶² One woman, presumably Agave,

59 Davie (1972) 147.

60 Formerly Toronto, Borowski Collection. See Shapiro (1994) 171–6.

61 Taplin (2007) 156–8 (figure 51); London, British Museum F133. Traficante (2007) argues for more frequent, though still not common, allusion to Euripides' Pentheus in vase-paintings.

62 Cohen (2000) 126–7 (figure 4.10).

clutches a handful of Pentheus' hair while raising her other hand to strike. This scene, too, depicts a prelude to violence.

Renaissance painters knew Bacchus (Dionysus) and they, too, shied away from Pentheus' death for the most part.⁶³ But one striking painting does give Pentheus his due: *Smembramento di Penteo* ("Dismemberment of Pentheus"), a fresco in the Camera del Cardinale, in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome (ca. 1548–1550), attributed to Daniele da Volterra (ca. 1509–1566). One of twelve in a frieze devoted to Bacchus (Dionysus), the fresco depicts three maenads tugging Pentheus' remaining limbs from his corpse while another holds a recently removed arm; yet another makes off with his head; the neck and shoulder stream with blood. Unlike other Renaissance artists and their late-classical predecessors, Daniele da Volterra paints the moment of death.⁶⁴ With the possible exception of the Apulian vase, these representations destabilize the relationship between myth, literature, and art in classical reception.

Music

Greek tragedy was music theatre; *Bacchant Women*, being no more or less musical than your average late-5th-century tragedy, has elicited a substantial body of musical responses. "The stories of Alcestis, Hippolytus, Iphigenia (in Aulis and Tauris) and Medea have proved particularly fruitful, and the terrors of *The Bacchae* have appealed to a number of modern composers."⁶⁵ Ralph Vaughan Williams (English, 1872–1958), Bela Bartok (Hungarian, 1881–1945), Iannis Xenakis (Greek /French, 1922–2001) and Philip Glass (American, 1937–), for example, have composed for ballets or stage productions of *Bacchant Women*, though none of those works have become well-known. The play has also inspired a sprinkling of instrumental works, a handful of ballets and choral works, and more than twenty operas, two or three of which *are* well-known.

Unsurprisingly, given its remarkable chorus, *Bacchant Women* is especially amenable to choral music. English composers in particular sought out Gilbert Murray's very English translation. In addition to Vaughan Williams' incidental

63 See, e.g., Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano, *The Wedding of Bacchus and Ariadne* (1505); Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1520–1523); Maerten van Heemskerck, *The Triumphal Procession of Bacchus* (1536–1537); Caravaggio, *Bacchus* (ca. 1595).

64 Roberts (1998) 5: Charles Gleyre's (1806–1874) *Pentheus, von den Maenaden verfolgt* ("Pentheus, chased by the Maenads," 1864; Basel, Kunstmuseum) is another bloodless depiction. Reid (1993) 11: 856: two items are known from a Pentheus series painted by Laurent de la Hyre (1606–1656). Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) sketched *The Death of Pentheus* (ca. 1775–1780), a pen-and-ink sketch now in a private collection, after a relief in the Giustiniani Collection.

65 Anderson/Mathiesen/Anderson (n. d.).

music (1911), the English composers Ernest Walker (1870–1949) and Gustav Holst (1874–1934) each composed a *Hymn to Dionysus* after Murray's translation, in 1906 and 1913 respectively. Neither work is especially ritualistic or orgiastic; Murray's secular (yet Anglican-tinged) mysticism is more evident than any Dionysian timbres, melodies, harmonies, or rhythms. More generally, modern (or Modernist) composers in England and North America continued to score texts from *Bacchant Women*, such as *Choruses from "The Bacchae"* (1938), by Canadian composer Violet Archer (1913–2000); *5 Choral Songs and Dances from "The Bacchae"* (1945), by English composer Granville Bantock (1868–1946); *Choral Scene from "The Bacchae"* (1953), by English composer Phyllis Tate (1911–1987); and the cantata, *Bacchae* (1956), by English composer Peter Tranchell (1922–1993).

Nevertheless, *Bacchant Women* has only left a major musical legacy in the sphere of opera. The play was a potential source for libretti as early as *Penthee* ("Pentheus", 1703), by Philippe, Duke of Orléans (1674–1723). Next, at century-long intervals, came *I Baccanali* ("The Bacchanals", 1807), by Italian opera composer Stefano Pavesi (1779–1850), and *Baccante* ("Bacchant Women", 1917), by Lidia Testore. More numerous and notable operas date from the 1920s onward, and *Bacchant Women* was no less present on the operatic stage in the early 20th century than on the theatrical stage. Other notable adaptations include *Die Bakchantinnen* ("The Bacchant Women", 1930), by the Austrian-born English composer Egon (Joseph) Wellesz (1885–1974); the one-act opera *Daphne* (1938), by German late-Romantic composer Richard Strauss (1864–1949), borrowing elements from the myth of Pentheus; *Le baccanti* ("The Bacchant Women", 1948), by Italian composer Giorgio Federico Ghedini (1892–1965); *Baccanterna* ("Bacchant Women", 1991), by Swedish composer Daniel Börtz (1943–), filmed for television in 1993 by Swedish director Ingmar Bergman (1918–2007); and *ΒΑΚΧΑΙ* ("Bacchant Women", 1992) by English composer John Buller (1927–2004).

The best and best-known opera of all, however, is *Król Roger* ("King Roger", 1926), by Polish composer Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937). After a halting entry into the repertoire, a late-20th century resurgence meant an average of almost one production per year worldwide since the mid-1990s. *Król Roger* is widely considered Szymanowski's masterpiece and a modern classic to boot. In the first (so-called "Byzantine") act, a shepherd appears before Roger II of Sicily at the Capella Palatina to introduce a new cult. In the second ("Eastern") act, the shepherd converts much of Roger's court, including Queen Roxana, to his cause. In the third ("Hellenic") act, they reconvene at an ancient Greek theatre; while the shepherd's followers dance, he transforms into Dionysus. Alone with his Arab advisor Edrisi, Roger greets the sun as the music comes to an anticlimactic resolution.

Szymanowski, who knew and liked not only Walter Pater's quasi-Nietzschean short story "Denys L'Auxerrois" ("Denys of Auxerre", 1886) but also *The Birth of Tragedy* itself, reworks *Bacchant Women* via Nietzsche.⁶⁶ Roger first rejects Dionysian ecstasy, then recognizes and reconsiders it before finally incorporating it into his own psyche, all the while continuing to honour Apollo. The score does contain exotic elements, yet these are not used specifically to illustrate the Apollo-Dionysus opposition.⁶⁷ Rather, *Król Roger* clears a new space for these influences to be heard anew. "At the same time the opera makes clear the need for Dionysus, and in musical terms its richness lies precisely in the fact that the exoticisms of earlier works, far from being eliminated, are rather placed within a new and broader perspective."⁶⁸

The other major operatic adaptation is rather closer to *Bacchant Women*, at least cosmetically: *The Bassarids* (1966), by German composer Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012), from a libretto by the Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden (1907–1973) and the American writer Chester Kallman (1921–1975). The libretto shows clear influence from Auden's friend, E. R. Dodds, in turning Nietzsche's cosmic opposition of Apollo and Dionysus into the more specific psychic (if not psycho-analytic) opposition between rational and irrational impulses.⁶⁹ In making Pentheus more rounded and plausible, Auden and Kallman render him a sympathetic, though doomed, figure. But Henze also reads the libretto against the grain and his score celebrates Dionysus' victory. "Henze's great achievement in the opera is to recreate in music Euripides' main theme—the conflict between Pentheus and Dionysus, and the increasingly overt power of the god."⁷⁰

The Bassarids, then, is animated by a dialectic between words and music, which is only partly mitigated by the use of traditional forms.⁷¹ Its unflinchingly Dionysian ending resembles but also departs from that of *Król Roger*: Dionysus, revealed as a god, deifies Semele (now the goddess Thyone) as flames flare, the Thebans kneel to worship their new deities in the light of a new day, and the music swells to a triumphant conclusion. Dionysus has won.

Bacchant Women tends to inspire dialectical operas.⁷² *Revelation in the Courthouse Park* (1961), by iconoclastic American composer and music theorist Harry Partch (1901–1974), wears the dialectic on its sleeve. The setting alternates

66 Wightman (1999) 275; Samson (1981) 141.

67 Samson (1981) 148, 150.

68 Samson (n. d.).

69 Ewans (2007).

70 Ewans (2007) 172.

71 Cannon (2012) 334–6.

72 Cowan (2010).

between small-town America (the courthouse park) for the “choruses”, featuring modern-day religious leader Dion (partly based on Elvis Presley) and conservative Sonny; and ancient Thebes for scenes featuring Dionysus and Euripides’ other characters. Both storylines end in disaster. Though Partch does not resolve the Apollo-Dionysus tension, he goes some way towards rendering it intelligible: “The composer clearly identified both with Dion/Dionysus, master of the sacred revels, and Sonny/Pentheus, the nonconformist outsider; the irreconcilability of these roles constitutes the heart of the tragedy.”⁷³ On the whole, opera composers modify *Bacchant Women* along stark Nietzschean lines. “Auden [...] maintained, correctly, that Euripides’ text is unviable as it stands for a modern opera.”⁷⁴

With “Dion” in mind, one final subculture of *Bacchant Women* music-dramas deserves mention: musicals. For one thing, two classic musicals from the rock-opera heyday featured a charismatic Dionysus-figure. *Tommy* (1969), the ground-breaking rock-opera (and later, musical) by English band The Who, featured a deaf, dumb, blind, pinball-playing messiah. *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973), produced and directed by Australian director and screenwriter Jim Sharman, is a musical tribute to science-fiction and horror B movies; it featured Frank N. Furter, an alien transvestite mad scientist. Adaptations and productions of *Bacchant Women* have also exploited the trope of the musical messiah, and some directors have mounted full-blown musicals, to mixed results. *Rave: The Bacchae of Euripides—Remixed* (2003), directed by Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts director Brian K. Jennings, seems to have delivered more alternative rock than rave music.⁷⁵ Peter Mills’ *The Rockae* (2007), replete with punning title, was billed as a hard-hitting heavy-metal musical but delivered “more Broadway rock than stadium metal”, with “eyeliner and wink-wink banter” undercutting the finale.⁷⁶ Indeed, John Tiffany’s notionally authentic production with the Scottish National Theatre that same year also dabbled in R&B, again with mixed results.⁷⁷ These missed opportunities might seem paradoxical, given American popular music’s stereotypically Dionysian nature. But Dionysus is more than a sexy stranger with a microphone. In point of fact, electronic dance music (EDM) may well be a more fruitful premise:

73 Stiller (n. d.).

74 Ewans (2007) 165.

75 <<http://joeykamay.wix.com/rave-the-baccahe#!>> [sic], accessed 24 February 2015.

76 Saltz (2007).

77 See below, pp. 532–3.

a recent *Bacchant Women* by Freeks Theatre, an independent theatre group at Stanford, promised “an immersive rave experience”.⁷⁸

Dance

Pulitzer Prize Winner William Inge’s *Picnic* (1953) has been identified as a Dionysiac dance work; of the handful of recorded ballet adaptations of *Bacchant Women*, there is little to say.⁷⁹

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Bacchant Women has enjoyed a chequered career on the stage. Euripides the Younger (a son or nephew) produced *Bacchant Women*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and *Alcmaeon* in the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens in around 405 BC, winning his namesake a fifth, posthumous, victory in Greece’s premier dramatic competition. In the early 2nd century BC, one Satyrus of Samos (a musician about whom we know almost nothing) once performed a song entitled *Dionysus*, and a lyre solo from *Bacchant Women*, at Delphi.⁸⁰ In 53 BC, at the end of Crassus’ life (and Plutarch’s *Life of Crassus*), the Parthian king’s court celebrated the Romans’ defeat at Carrhae with a remarkable performance in Armenia: a tragic actor named Jason of Tralles used the actual head of Crassus, recently delivered to the king, as a prop while singing the part of Agave in Euripides’ play (Plutarch, *Crassus* 33). Plutarch adds, “they say that the expedition finished with this after-piece, just like a tragedy”.⁸¹ For Jason as for Plutarch, *sparagmos* remains a compelling, theatrical form of violence, destruction, and dissolution. On a less serious note, the emperor Nero once took the stage with a lyre and performed a *Bacchant Women*, or at least extracts from one (Cassius Dio 61. 20).⁸² Thereafter, however, the documented performance history of *Bacchant Women* falls silent for a very long time—until the Court Theatre performance of Gilbert Murray’s translation in 1908.

Even that production bombed.⁸³ In fact, *Bacchant Women* was not a regular fixture on the professional stage for another fifty years. The earliest

78 <<http://thefreekstheater.wix.com/freeks#!bacchae/c790>>, accessed 24 February 2015.

79 Donovan (1984); Reid (1993) II: 856–8.

80 Csapo/Slater (1995) 45.

81 See Braund (1993).

82 Literally, “he performed on the lyre some *Attis* or *Bacchae*”.

83 See Perris (2012) for discussion and bibliography.

recorded performance in the USA was in 1921, the earliest recorded commercial production not until 1963.⁸⁴ Not that it was never performed again. The English actor-manager Harley Granville-Barker (1877–1946) staged Murray's translation again in 1912, and 30 more performances or adaptations of *Bacchant Women* followed before 1960. Nevertheless, something did happen in the 1960s and 1970s. Of 102 stage productions and adaptations of *Bacchant Women* listed on the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) database from 1900 to 1979, 70% (71 productions) date from the 1960s and 1970s alone. In fact, APGRD data support the following conclusions:

- (1) *Bacchant Women* was not wholly absent, nor even almost absent, from the world stage in the first half of the 20th century;
- (2) other Greek tragedies were more popular before, during, and after the 1960s and 1970s, notably *Oedipus the King* and *Medea*;
- (3) in the 1960s and 1970s, *Bacchant Women* gained in absolute and relative popularity to become one of Euripides' greatest hits, after which it walked more or less in step with other Greek dramas.⁸⁵

The most famous and influential production since the 5th century BC was in fact a bloody and sexually explicit adaptation: *Dionysus in 69*, produced by pioneering director Richard Schechner (1934–) and his Performance Group 163 times between 1968 and 1969 in New York and elsewhere. This notorious work, a landmark in theatre history, remains a landmark in classical reception also. For all the nudity, violence, and devised material, *Dionysus in 69* was as much a meta-performance about Euripides' *Bacchant Women* as it was a new work.

Dionysus in 69 has been exhaustively documented; its basic features are as follows. The text, which acknowledges heavy use of William Arrowsmith's 1959 translation, follows the same basic trajectory and *dramatis personae* as its source material.⁸⁶ The plot eroticises the formalist structure of *Bacchant Women*, transforming the episodes into stages in a developing sexual relationship between Dionysus and Pentheus, and turning the choral sections into recurrent, ritualistic irruptions of orgiastic sexuality: a "birth ritual", a "death

84 Hartigan (1995) 82.

85 *Bacchant Women*, 1900–1979: 102, of which 71 in 1960–1979. *Medea*: 247, of which 118 in 1960–1979. *Oedipus the King*: 373, of which 149 in 1960–1979. Euripides, 1900–1959: *Medea*, 129; *Hippolytus*, 69; *Trojan Women*, 92; *Bacchant Women*, 31. Euripides, 1960–1979: *Medea*, 118; *Hippolytus*, 47; *Trojan Women*, 58; *Bacchant Women*, 71. APGRD (Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama) data current as at 12 February 2015.

86 Schechner (1970).

ritual", and an "ecstasy dance" (all eventually performed nude); and a "caress" involving group touching of audience members. All told, *Dionysus in 69* set terms for the reception of *Bacchant Women* which still stand: counter-culture, politics, gender and sexual identity, sexual revolution, and so on. In so doing, it went against the grain of current scholarly opinion, making Pentheus an antagonist (not victim), and Dionysus a hero (not villain) for the ages.⁸⁷

Since then, a number of high-profile productions worldwide have made an impression.⁸⁸ One important example is the *Bacchant Women* by Japanese director Tadashi Suzuki (1939–), first performed in 1978 and revived repeatedly over the following decades. Over time, Suzuki used *Bacchant Women* to explore his own "Suzuki method" of theatre training, a method which assumed and relied on performers' shared humanity. In so doing, he turned the clash of cultures depicted in *Bacchant Women* into a *rapprochement* between, and perhaps a fusion of, Japanese and European culture. In subsequent revivals, Suzuki used Japanese and English actors in a bilingual production and eventually "use[d] Euripides' play to stage my world view" in a work renamed *Dionysus* (1990–).⁸⁹ Ultimately, this long-running and well-travelled production demonstrates the fluidity of *Bacchant Women* in performance, its enduring international popularity, and its potential as a master-text of East-West encounters.

Suzuki's *Bacchant Women* prefigured another notable Asiatic production, this time by renowned Greek director Theodoros Terzopoulos. In 1986, Terzopoulos directed his new company, Attis Theatre, in a production of *Bacchant Women* for the Greek Drama International Meetings in Delphi. Greek critics panned Terzopoulos' *Bacchant Women* but foreigners lapped it up on tour—apparently for the self-same reasons. Terzopoulos de-emphasized language and text and emphasized the body; promoted notionally Asian performance elements over an authentic "Greek" style; and included ritualistic phenomena which seemed, to some, to confuse Dionysiac cult for Dionysiac drama. But the marriage of *Bacchant Women* to post-modern theatre aesthetics was, some would argue, inevitable.⁹⁰ At the very least, these phenomena (the body, the Other, and ritual) have become recurring tropes in reception of the play.

A similar story has played out worldwide. From the 1900s on, *Bacchant Women* was certainly an option for a budding director of Greek tragedy, but not

87 Contrast Winnington-Ingram (1948) and Dodds (1960).

88 See Fischer-Lichte (2014). In particular, the following paragraphs draw heavily on pp. 27–47 (Schechner); 116–35 (Terzopoulos); 159–85 (Suzuki).

89 Suzuki, in his director's notes in the program, quoted by Fischer-Lichte (2014) 179.

90 See, e.g., Sampatakakis (2004).

one which stood out. Since *Dionysus in 69*, and since the cultural revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, *Bacchant Women* has tended to resonate more and more with 20th- (and 21st-) century concerns, though of course these resonances were heard differently in different national cultures.

Greece, for example, hosted well-received and comparatively conservative productions: in 1950, directed by Linos Karzis; in 1962, directed by the renowned actor-director Alexis Minotis (1898/1899–1990); and in 1975, directed by Spyros Evangelatos (1940–).⁹¹ But then came a celebrated 1977 production of *Bacchant Women* directed by the avant-garde champion and Aristophanes specialist Karolos Koun (1908–1987), which opened up Greek tragedy, and *Bacchant Women* in particular, to a hitherto untried range of theatrical approaches. In turn, Terzopoulos' 1986 *Bacchant Women* doubled down on avant-garde aesthetics, dismembering the very idea of "Greek" theatre. In a 1997 production at Epidauros, German-French director Matthias Langhoff (1941–) went for sh(1)ock value, making good use of nudity, stage blood, and slabs of raw meat.⁹² By the time Peter Hall's National Theatre production arrived at Epidauros in 2002, its supposedly modern aesthetic was almost *passé*.⁹³

In Sicily, the Istituto Nazionale Drame Antico (INDA) has staged *Bacchant Women* five times in the ancient theatre of Syracuse, in 1922, 1950, 1980, 1998, and 2002. To a degree, successive productions became less conservative, moving towards greater physicality, more "Dionysian" music, less traditional dramaturgy, and a more contemporary reading of the text.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, nothing in the Syracusan performances compares to the physicality (or bloodthirstiness) of Terzopoulos' or Langhoff's productions.

Less so does one find anything approaching the avant-garde sensibility of the German director Klaus Michael Grüber (1941–2008), whose 1974 *Bakchen* ("Bacchant Women") was the most important German-language production of the play ever. Before the 1960s, *Bacchant Women* was not especially well liked in Germany, despite Goethe's enthusiasm for it. After Henze's *The Bassarids* in 1966, however, and two 1973 productions besides, the time was ripe for a landmark German production. Performed as part of the "Antikenprojekt" ("Antiquity Project") at the Schaubühne Berlin, Grüber's *Bakchen* was wholly unlike any production of *Bacchant Women* seen before, and perhaps since. In particular, Grüber resolutely refused to present an accessible, intelli-

91 Georgiou (2014). Fischer-Lichte (2014) 121: Greek reviewers criticised Minotis' 1962 *Bacchae* but not for anything to do with its Greekness or otherwise.

92 Van Steen (2013).

93 See below, p. 532.

94 Pedersoli (2012).

gible message, thereby refusing also the rationalistic and didactic Brechtian inheritance.⁹⁵ Instead, *Bakchen* offered a series of avant-garde tableaux and scenes which were derived (at least tangentially) from Euripides' play but which nevertheless added up to something rather different from classic European drama.⁹⁶ A near-naked Dionysus lay on a hospital gurney caressing a woman's shoe, repeating the words "I, Dionysus, the son of Zeus" from line 1 of *Bacchant Women*, whereas Pentheus entered the stage naked, one arm in plaster, spouting text from Wittgenstein's diaries. In a process which has been likened to *sparagmos*, Grüber's *Bakchen* completely rejected the then-dominant analogy between German high culture and ancient Greek culture.⁹⁷ For Grüber, Euripides' *Bacchant Women* was an opportunity to disrupt classicism and, in so doing, force a rethink of German culture *tout court*. Here we find yet another example of a landmark production of *Bacchant Women* from the 1960s and 1970s which managed somehow to "make it new".

Why did *Bacchant Women* come of age when it did? A world-renowned theatre historian has offered one explanation: globalization.⁹⁸ Performances and adaptations of *Bacchant Women* from the 1960s onward arguably responded to globalization by performing three functions attributed to Dionysus and Dionsyiac ritual: "they celebrated liberation and communality, destabilized the cultural identity of their spectators, and performed a productive encounter or destructive clash of cultures".⁹⁹ Clearly, a number of noteworthy theatrical works which dealt with Dionysus did in fact also deal with globalization, community, identity, and culture. *Dionysus in 69*, for example, worked to create a new kind of community and a new kind of freedom. Suzuki's *Bacchant Women* hosted an international, intercultural encounter between Greek, Japanese, and other theatrical traditions. Terzopoulos' *Bacchant Women*, by contrast, contested national identity and the "Greekness" of Greek culture. Many other productions have likewise explored community, identity, and culture. But just as clearly, there is more to this than globalization and Dionysus. Correlation is not causation. The play—*this* play—is the thing, and as in Wallace Stevens' poem, one should at least consider not (only) ideas about the thing but (also) the thing itself. *Bacchant Women* enacts a cultural revolution. It dramatizes a confrontation between two diametrically opposed opponents, one conservative

95 Remshardt (1999) 46–7.

96 For a description of the performance, see Remshardt (1999) 37–41; Fischer-Lichte (2014) 101–8.

97 Fischer-Lichte (2014) 93–115.

98 Fischer-Lichte (2014).

99 Fischer-Lichte (2014) 22.

and local (Pentheus), one radical and foreign (Dionysus). It is violent in the extreme. It stars Dionysus. Also, globalization or no globalization, *Bacchant Women* just happens to be an excellent play.

In 2002, Peter Hall directed a high-profile, high-art production of *Bacchant Women* for the National Theatre, in Colin Teevan's new translation.¹⁰⁰ One of this production's more noteworthy features was an overt attempt to tap into a Dionysian Other. Between some half-heartedly exotic choreography, Harrison Birtwistle's vaguely ethnic score, and a politicized translation which offered theatre as a salve for global conflict, not to mention the timing of the first performance some eight months after 9/11, the 2002 Hall/Teevan *Bacchant Women* had more to say about geopolitics, conflict, and religion than it did about late capitalism.

Quite unlike Hall's stiff-backed *Bacchant Women*, a 2003 production by The Bacchanals theatre company in Wellington, New Zealand managed to have plenty of fun with this gloomy play.¹⁰¹ In particular, instead of listening to Euripides' report narratives, audience members watched pre-recorded film clips, replete with special effects and plenty of fake blood, projected on a screen. The Bacchanals, a company which has claimed to be "dedicated to exploring text-based theatre (none of this devised crap for us!)",¹⁰² thus broke ancient convention by representing murder but also respected it by not enacting murder. Although The Bacchanals have at other times openly politicized ancient drama (as in *Clouds* in 2013), this *Bacchant Women* was marked most of all by unfettered theatrical brio.

Finally, John Tiffany's 2007 Scottish National Theatre production shamelessly flaunted its own frivolity in a showy (and thoroughly entertaining!) performance which was about as far as one can get from Terzopoulos, Suzuki, or Grüber.¹⁰³ For one thing, David Greig wrote a campy Dionysus just perfect for the actor Alan Cumming.¹⁰⁴ Entering from the air at great leisure, bare-bottomed and suspended upside down on a wire, Cumming set the tone, and the scene, with a programmatic, tongue-in-cheek opening: "So, Thebes, /

100 See above, pp. 514–5.

101 The Bacchanals, *The Bacchae by Euripides*, BATS Theatre, Wellington, New Zealand (November 2003), attended by the author.

102 <www.thebacchanals.net>, accessed 10 February 2015.

103 The author attended a performance at the King's Theatre, Edinburgh, in August 2007.

104 See above pp. 515–6. Cumming (1965–) is a bisexual Scottish-American film and television actor known, among other things, for LGBT activism and for a witty and sexually ambiguous stage and screen persona.

I'm back."¹⁰⁵ Throughout the play, Cumming's oversexed Dionysus made not-so-covert advances as Pentheus, played by Tony Curran, manfully restrained himself: "During these rites—this dance—would / Dionysos' spirit try to / Enter me? Like he does with you?"¹⁰⁶ Add in real fireworks on stage; choral lyrics rewritten in a simplified pop idiom; and an all-singing, all-dancing, all-black chorus dressed as backup singers; and the result was pure consumer entertainment with no qualms in sight.

Like Greig's translation, then, Tiffany's whizz-bang production overindulged in signification to the extent that what shone through was mostly sound and fury.¹⁰⁷ When Agave appeared with Pentheus' head, some audience-members giggled. In a sense, Tiffany and Greig exhausted the play's semiotic potential, especially its capacity for postmodern transgression, turning out instead a sepia-toned *Rocky Horror Show* tailored to well-heeled festival-goers. Contrast the Public Theatre production (2009) directed by Lithuanian-American director and writer Joanne Akalaitis (1937–): Akalaitis reverently treated *Bacchant Women* as a theatrical *mysterium* and thus failed, by all accounts, to make anything of it at all.¹⁰⁸ Again, one sees evidence of a certain decadent aesthetic, and perhaps of diminishing returns.

It was not always so, however: *Bacchant Women* has also enjoyed a long and vigorous afterlife in adaptation. In the 1800s, for example, well before Murray's translation took the stage, two Oxford undergraduates unceremoniously dumped *Bacchant Women* right into a domestic farce about adultery and intemperance: the burlesque *Pentheus* (1866). As is to be expected from a burlesque, *Pentheus* takes an irreverent view. But *Pentheus* did more than sweeten *Bacchant Women* for Victorian audiences; it substituted a sugar-coated placebo. Pentheus is a temperance supporter but private drinker; Bacchus, a wine merchant, gets him drunk. Pentheus spontaneously combusts and undergoes apotheosis.

The following decades saw further plays about Dionysus but only one adaptation proper before 1958: George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara* (1905).¹⁰⁹

105 Greig (2007) 7.

106 Greig (2007) 27.

107 See, e.g., Meineck (2007).

108 Meineck (2009).

109 I draw on Hall/Macintosh (2005) chapter 17, "The Shavian Euripides and the Euripidean Shaw". Dionysus is prominent in Eugene O'Neill's *The Great God Brown* (1926) and Jean Cocteau's *Bacchus* (1951). See also, e.g., Hernández de la Fuente (2014) 668–70 on Lorca's *Blood Wedding* (1932) and *Yerma* (1934); Fitzpatrick Dean (2003) 51–2 on Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990); and Peacock and Devine (1997) 86–91 on Friel's *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993).

Although *Major Barbara* is not a burlesque, the play looks back fondly on the burlesque tradition while clutching at Modernism. Unique in the reception of *Bacchant Women*, it is also a double adaptation of both Euripides' tragedy and Aristophanes' *Frogs*, with the *Bacchant Women* material coming in Acts One and Two, followed by "clear allusions to Aristophanes' *Frogs* in its third act".¹¹⁰ As Shaw noted in the original dedication, *Major Barbara* "stands indebted to [Gilbert Murray] in more ways than one." *Bacchant Women* and *Frogs* were the two plays which accompanied *Hippolytus* in Gilbert Murray's first volume of translations. The character of Adolphus Cusins (a classical scholar) was based on Murray. Shaw even recycled some of Murray's *Bacchant Women* verses. But the "*Frogs* third" of *Major Barbara* takes us away from the realm of tragedy and well away from *sparagmos*, leading to a relatively upbeat ending in which Barbara agrees to marry Cusins and reconciles with her father. It would be another fifty years before a really serious literary or theatrical *Bacchant Women* adaptation would appear.

From 1958, however (only four years after *Lord of the Flies*), stage adaptations proper came thick and fast, with ten performed and published in English in the "long sixties" (1958–1974) alone.¹¹¹ These plays form an impressive, diverse, yet cohesive group, and it is worth surveying them together:

1. *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), by Tennessee Williams (1911–1983), one of the greatest American playwrights of the 20th century. In this loosest of adaptations, Catharine Holly is forced to reveal the truth about her cousin Sebastian Venable's death: he was torn limb from limb by a gang of young men whose sexual favours he had sought.
2. *Gentle Jack* (1963; 1965), by English playwright and screenwriter Robert Bolt (1924–1995). Jacko Cadence, voted in as Jack-in-the-Green while on a holiday, meets a Dionysian fairy named Jack. Jack rewards Jacko and his associates with material luxury, erotic success, and personal development. In the end, Jack is killed by the chorus; when they move away to reveal him, "*his face is a red mask*."¹¹²
3. *The Erpingham Camp* (1966), by the English master of black comedy, Joe Orton (1933–1967). At an unnamed English holiday camp, a camper, Kenny (originally to be named 'Don'), becomes angry after an insult to his pregnant wife; the camp manager, Erpingham, tries to restrain Kenny and control the other campers. Kenny and his supporters engage in looting

¹¹⁰ Hall/Macintosh (2005) 499.

¹¹¹ See Marwick (1998) on cultural revolution in the long sixties.

¹¹² Bolt (1965) 109.

- and violence; Erpingham attempts reconnaissance but is killed in a *melée*, falling through a hole in the floor; his body is lamented.
4. W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman's libretto for Henze's opera *The Bassarids* (1966).¹¹³
 5. *A Refined Look at Existence* (1966), by Australian playwright and painter Rodney Milgate (1934–2014). The *dramatis personae* of this antipodean adaptation speak volumes: Belly Cadmush and his wife Harmony; Fred Tiresash; Simile Smith and her husband Jovey; Donny, Simile's son by a lover named Mort Paramour; Jack and Igave Champion and their son, Penthouse. Donny is a singer-cum-preacher, and the crowd at one of his concerts kills Penthouse.
 6. Richard Schechner and The Performance Group, *Dionysus in 69* (1968).¹¹⁴
 7. *Mr O'Dwyer's Dancing Party* (1968), by James K. Baxter (1926–1972), a landmark New Zealand poet. An itinerant Irish dance teacher, Tom O'Dwyer, causes havoc when he starts a women's dance group in suburban New Zealand. The Pentheus-figure, John Ennis, whom O'Dwyer has got roaring drunk, interrupts the women's dance group, only to be surrounded, taunted, and ridden like a donkey (by his wife) until he suffers a back injury.
 8. *The Disorderly Women* (1969), by English playwright and novelist John Bowen (1924–): a pessimistic close adaptation which rebuts utopian readings of *Bacchant Women*. Bowen updates Thebes to a bureaucracy-ridden liberal democracy and Pentheus to its reasonable, overly tolerant king (in the Harold Wilson mould) facing an influx of hippie culture. In the absence of stiff-backed resistance, Dionysus, a vaguely Eastern guru who ingests hallucinogenic mushrooms, runs wild.
 9. *Rites* (1969), by English novelist, poet, and playwright Maureen Duffy (1933–). In a women's bathroom, various female characters enumerate their problems with men, toy with an anatomically correct male toddler doll, and eventually murder an androgynous woman (whom they have mistaken for a man) in a frenzy of group violence.
 10. *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973), by Nigerian Nobel Prize winner, poet, and playwright Wole Soyinka (1934–). Soyinka's *Bacchant Women* applies Africanist discourse to Euripides' text, making Thebes a colonial slave society and Dionysus a political revolutionary. The play ends with the titular "communion rite"; Agave drinks the blood which spurts from Pentheus' severed head.

113 See above, p. 525.

114 See above, pp. 528–9.

Since *Major Barbara*, adaptations typically include a version of Pentheus' death, sometimes narrated but more often in the *mise-en-scène*. Fair enough: one can make good theatre out of crazy people killing each other. More broadly, each of these plays views *Bacchant Women* through one of three wide-angle, and not mutually exclusive, lenses: sex and gender, counter-culture, and (post-)colonialism. In terms of sex and gender, *Dionysus in 69* is the template: the work eroticizes *Bacchant Women* wholesale by mapping cultural revolution neatly, and optimistically, onto sexual revolution. *Suddenly Last Summer*, by contrast, offers a fable about maternal repression and the divided self by depicting the negative consequences of homoerotic desire. *Rites*, in turn, explores the darker side of sexual liberation from a feminist perspective. Right when these women fight back against patriarchal sexual and social norms, they symbolically self-destruct by killing another woman. *Mr O'Dwyer's Dancing Party* explores sexual liberation from a male bourgeois perspective: Ennis' affair with a younger woman disappoints him; his wife's Dionysian dancing leaves him bed-ridden. Sex and gender have always been key concerns of *Bacchant Women* adaptations, but free love does not always turn out so well as in *Dionysus in 69*.

When it comes to counter-culture, *Bacchant Women* has been adopted as a hippie tract, firstly in *Dionysus in 69* and then by other works, such as the "hippie version" directed by André Gregory (1934–) at Yale in 1969.¹¹⁵ Adaptations followed suit, though not unwaveringly. Where *Gentle Jack* depicts a flavourless iteration of counter-culture (self-actualization for restrained Englishmen), Orton's roughly contemporary play *The Erpingham Camp* explodes English reserve with Bacchanalian farce. Along similar lines, *A Refined Look at Existence* attempts (not wholly successfully) to combine theatre of ideas with satirical burlesque, again offering a general statement on mid-1960s spiritual drought. *The Disorderly Women* takes a uniquely conservative line: irrational violence is endemic to all societies, not merely totalitarian states; liberal democracies must resist Dionysus, not welcome him; flower power, if left to go to seed, presages dystopia, not utopia. Finally, Soyinka's *Bacchant Women* turns the canonical, European source on its head, and his revolutionary postcolonial reading was not without its critics.

Nevertheless, Soyinka's play eventually inspired a cottage industry of post-colonial adaptations. Roy Travis' 1982 opera *The Black Bacchantes* used West African instruments and dance rhythms. Less successfully, Conall Morrison's *The Bacchae of Baghdad* (2006) transplanted Dionysus (in dreadlocks and an orange jumpsuit) and Pentheus (in military fatigues) into the Iraq war, reading *Bacchant Women* as a play about the clash of civilizations. Harry Love's *Hūrai*

115 Green (1994) 45.

(2011) even managed to fit it into 19th-century New Zealand, with a fictional Māori prophet standing in for Dionysus and a missionary for Pentheus.

The long sixties thus demonstrated that *Bacchant Women*, with its central clash of two protagonists, can be made into a play about any ideological conflict that one might wish. The long sixties also demonstrated that the core of the play is, as always, *sparagmos*. Adaptations from after the 1960s and 1970s also interpret *Bacchant Women* in terms of sex and gender, counter-culture, and/or postcolonialism, but with the added spice of postmodern aesthetics. Thus Caryl Churchill (1938–) and David Lan (1952–) deconstruct *Bacchant Women* and only partly put it back together in their feminist play *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986), while *The Bacchae* 2.1 (1993), by the “remaking” aficionado Charles Mee (1938–), does so along less political lines.

So: whither now? Three recent adaptations map out some terrain. Kneehigh Theatre, for example, an international company based in Cornwall, adapted *Bacchant Women* as *The Bacchae* (2004): a theatrical tour-de-force which uses Euripides as a launching pad for a creative, riotous, joyous testing of the limits, and power, of theatre ancient and modern. “The challenge was to rewrite the story with a modern, entertaining and accessible voice whilst at the same time retaining the dramatic weight and meaning of each scene.”¹¹⁶ Like the Greig-Tiffany *Bacchant Women*, the Kneehigh Theatre adaptation is chock-full of ideas, more even than *Dionysus in 69*. There is, of course, plenty of sex, drinking, music, and dancing. The chorus-members wear tutus and use newspapers to make *thyrsos* (Bacchic staffs) and throw paper at the audience. Dionysus occasionally speaks Hungarian. “Grandmother Bacchae” sings, “I want to walk down the street with my pants around my ankles”. Agave “tears PENTHEUS’ head off.”¹¹⁷ This is semiotic overload once more, but it succeeds because the Kneehigh Theatre *Bacchant Women* is not bound by translation or the conventions of authentic production. The collaborators treat *Bacchant Women* as, in essence, a canonical classic which is solid enough, capacious enough, and indeed good enough, to take whatever they might put in it.

Bacchant Women has also been adapted into a first-rate BBC radio play: Andrew Rissik’s intelligent, well-written, and impeccably acted *Dionysus* (2003). Starting from the premise that Dionysus was a proto-Christ, *Dionysus* argued strenuously that Dionysiac cult was a real religion with real adherents and that *Bacchant Women* is a play about God and humankind. As a virtue of its form, *Dionysus* also succeeds aesthetically where others have failed. By not adapting its source material *in toto* (i.e., by adapting the words but not the visuals), *Dionysus* insists, much like Greek tragedy, “Tell, Don’t Show.”

116 Carl Grose in Grose/Murphy/Rice/Kneehigh Theatre (2005) 65.

117 Grose/Murphy/Rice/Kneehigh Theatre (2005) 75, 115.

More recently still, Ché Walker's *The Lightning Child* (2013) interleaved a main plot adapted from *Bacchant Women* with a framing scene, featuring Neil Armstrong on the moon listening to the story of Dionysus and Pentheus, and other scenes featuring heroin addicts, a Billie Holiday fan, Caster Semenya, and Holiday herself. *The Lightning Child* thus refused one-to-one adaptation of *Bacchant Women* but also eschewed the allegorical tit-for-tat one finds in Harry Partch's *Revelation in the Courthouse Park*.¹¹⁸ With subplots referring to drugs, music, gender, and mortality, *The Lightning Child* was as much an overt commentary on *Bacchant Women* as it was an adaptation. All in all, plays since the turn of the millenium have tended to treat *Bacchant Women* not only as source material but also as an object of contemplation and debate.¹¹⁹

The foregoing survey suggests that the special status of *Bacchant Women* derives not only from Nietzsche, globalization, or sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll, but also, ultimately, from more primordial phenomena worked into the fabric of the play: conflict, change, and violence. "Critics sometimes ask what a given play is 'about', and would not welcome the obvious answer that *Bacchae* (for example) is about the death of Pentheus and its circumstances."¹²⁰ Over time, 'Dionysus versus Pentheus' has become a symbol for any violent ideological conflict. In the process, performers, readers, and adaptors have opened up *Bacchant Women* to a limitless range of readings, marking it indelibly as a semiotician's dream come true.

Screen

Dionysus has had his moments, if not a full fifteen minutes, of onscreen fame. He has been spotted in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema* (1968) and Giorgos Panousopoulos' *Mania* (1985); less convincingly, in Jane Campion's *Holy Smoke!* (1999) and Lars von Trier's *Dogville* (2003); and even in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2008).¹²¹ The film *Alexander the Great* (1980), by the brilliant Greek auteur Theo Angelopoulos (1935–2012), includes a *sparagmos* in a meditation on violence and memory in Greek history. Literary and theatrical adaptations have themselves also been adapted into successful films, such as *Major Barbara* (1941), *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959), *Lord of the Flies* (1963), and *Death in Venice* (1971). Even so, however, "the canonical status of [...] Euripides' *Bacchae* on the modern theatrical stage has yielded a surpris-

118 See above, pp. 525–6.

119 In Carl Hancock Rux's *Talk* (2002), for example, an early scene involves a woman displaying an amphora painted with scenes from *Bacchant Women*: a play on a pot within a play.

120 Heath (1987) 90.

121 Fusillo (2006) 212–27; Treu (2007) 369–75; Michelakis (2013) 40; Mongodi (2007); Bullen (forthcoming).

ingly small number of [direct] film adaptations.”¹²² It is an illustration of the play’s versatility that it has provoked such a range of idiosyncratic responses in just five films:

1. *Le baccanti* (“The Bacchant Women,” 1961), by Italian director Giorgio Ferroni (1908–1981). Ferroni’s expansive adaptation, also titled *Bondage Gladiator Sexy* (!) for the English-speaking market, makes Dionysus a sympathetic figure and allows Pentheus to die heroically in a swordfight.
2. *Dionysus* (1963), by avant-garde American filmmaker Charles Boultenhouse (1926–1994). In this 26-minute film, dancers perform the three principal roles of Pentheus, Dionysus, and Agave, and there is also a chorus of filmmakers.
3. *Dionysus in 69* (1970), by American director and thriller specialist Brian de Palma (1940–). De Palma documents a performance of *Dionysus in 69* using a trademark split screen.
4. *Two Suns in the Sky* (1991), by Greek director Giorgos Stambouloupoulos. In the 4th century AD, Christianity clashes with paganism and ancient Greek drama. *Two Suns in the Sky*, the title of which alludes to *Bacchant Women*, includes shots of actors performing parts of the play; the film ends with a realistic *sparagmos*.
5. *The Bacchae* (2002, unreleased), by American director Brad Mays (1955–). This independent film adaptation, which grew out of Mays’ successful stage production, suffered funding problems and was never distributed.

The two European adaptations hold *Bacchant Women* at arm’s length: Ferroni’s *Le baccanti* folds it into a heroic costume drama, while Stambouloupoulos’ *Two Suns in the Sky* uses it to great effect as an allegorical play-within-a-film. Even the English-language films, which are more intimate with *Bacchant Women*, nevertheless engage with it at one remove, through dance or theatre performance. The play—the thing itself—thus seems to resist film adaptation. It is of course a bloody, violent work, and bloody violence is aesthetically appealing. As the basis for a screenplay, however, Euripides’ text is fodder for dark, difficult art-house cinema, not epic fantasy or mainstream horror. As a Greek *tragôidia* (“tragedy”), moreover, *Bacchant Women* does not represent violent death onstage, and the interplay of offstage violence and onstage lament is part and parcel of its dramatic effect. Filmmakers might well be drawn to the iconic scenes described in Euripides’ report narratives, but incorporating those sequences into a realistic *mise-en-scène* runs counter to the deep structures of the text. Even on screen, the play’s still the thing.

122 Michelakis (2013) 40.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Bacchant Women*

Bacchant Women elicits vigorous responses from critics and scholars: on the rich critical history, see H. Oranje, *Euripides' Bacchae: The Play and its Audience*, translated by W. A. Weir (Leiden: Brill, 1984) 1–19; S. Mills, *Euripides' Bacchae* (London: Duckworth, 2006) 80–102; and Billings (forthcoming). *Bacchant Women* often stands in for tragedy itself: C. Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*, expanded edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) on “Dionysiac poetics”; A. Bierl, *Dionysos und die griechische Tragödie* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1991) on metatragedy; G. Radke, *Tragik und Metaträgik: Euripides' Bakchen und die moderne Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2003) on Aristotelian pity and fear; W. Storm, *After Dionysus: A Theory of the Tragic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) on *sparagmos* and tragic character.

Dionysus remains in demand, with an upcoming conference and numerous recent books: R. Schlesier (ed.) *A Different God? Dionysos and Ancient Polytheism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); F. Mac Góráin, “Apollo and Dionysus in Virgil,” *Incontri di filologia classica* 12 (2012/2013, published 2014) 191–238; A. Bernabé/M. Herrero de Járegui/A. Jiménez San Cristóbal/I./R. Martin Hernandez (eds.) *Redefining Dionysos* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); F. Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce. Dioniso nei discorsi letterari e figurativi cristiani (II–IV s.)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2014); C. Isler-Kerényi, *Dionysos in Classical Athens: An Understanding Through Images* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); and S. Wyler, *Les images de Liber. Perceptions du dionysisme dans la Rome républicaine et augustéenne* (forthcoming).¹²³

At the same time, the reception studies boom has produced articles, essays, and, more recently, monographs specifically on *Bacchant Women*. Friesen (forthcoming) surveys reception from the Hellenistic period to the Byzantine period and offers close readings of selected examples, focusing on Roman, Jewish, and Christian responses. H. Fünke, “Euripides,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 8/9 (1965–1966) 233–79 collects sources on the ancient reception of Euripides, including numerous references to *Bacchant Women*. Oranje (1984) analyses the play by way of the original audience's reception. MacDonald (2015) 11–66, controversially, identifies reception of *Bacchant Women* in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

When it comes to modern reception worldwide, the entries on Dionysus and Pentheus in Reid (1993 I: 348–69, II: 856–8) are a standard reference;

123 The “Dionysus in Rome” conference at University College London (scheduled for 3–4 September 2015) will reconsider Bacchus' meaning in the Roman milieu.

Fusillo (2006) is as good a place as any to start reading. Most of the essays in Beltrametti (2007) touch on reception, while those in Leege and Poiss (forthcoming) do so directly under the umbrella of “modern transformations”. Shorter studies cover geographical areas: Remshardt (1999) on Germany; Treu (2007) on Italy; Hernández de la Fuente (2014) on Spain; Georgiou (2014) on Greece.

Regarding performance, I know of no single work on stagecraft in *Bacchant Women*. Taplin (1978) chooses it (along with *Hippolytus* and *Ion*) to illustrate Euripidean stagecraft. M. Powers, *Athenian Tragedy in Performance: A Guide to Contemporary Studies and Historical Debates* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2014) uses it to explore scholarly controversies about stagecraft. The *indices locorum* in Taplin (1977) and M. R. Halleran, *Stagecraft in Euripides* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985) contain further references.

Fischer-Lichte (2014) discusses 20th- and 21st-century Dionysiac drama, on which see also Sampatakakis (2004). H. Flashar, *Inszenierung der Antike*, second edition (Munich: Beck, 2009) and Hartigan (1995) 81–9 flesh out the performance history. Perris (forthcoming) covers 20th- and 21st-century translation and adaptation in English. Smith (1986) 116–7 catalogues theatrical adaptations in an invaluable list. Shorter studies compare multiple adaptations: A. Hersh, “‘How Sweet the Kill’: Orgiastic Female Violence in Contemporary Re-visions of Euripides’ *The Bacchae*,” *Modern Drama* 35 (1992) 409–23; E. Hale Winkler, “Three recent versions of the *Bacchae*,” *Themes in Drama* 15 (1993) 217–28; M. Rubik, “The *Bacchae* in Modern English Drama,” in W. Huber/M. Middeke (eds.) *Contemporary Drama in English Volume 5: Anthropological Perspectives* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher, 1998) 59–67; Mills (2006) 103–20; Davidson, J. F. (2007) “Euripides’ *Bacchae* in New Zealand Dress,” *Antichthon* 41: 97–108. R. Russi, *Le voci di Dioniso: il dionisismo novecentesco e le trasposizioni musicali delle Baccanti* (Torino: EDT, 2008) devotes a monograph to music; Cowan (2010) surveys three operas; *Grove Music Online* is invaluable for music reception.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

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An Appendix

Ion: A Quest

Karelisa V. Hartigan

Euripides' Ion, set in Delphi, is a play about a quest. In the course of its action, we meet a woman and her husband looking for answers and a youth who is prompted to ask questions after hearing of their search. Creusa, queen of Athens, seeks to know what happened to the son she abandoned among the rocks on the north slope of the Athenian Acropolis; her husband Xuthus wants to know whether he will ever have a son. After meeting this couple, Ion, temple acolyte, seeks to know both his identity and the nature of the god he serves. The play's action develops as a quest to find answers for the queen, king, and temple boy, while the audience is led on in this quest to discover the nature of Apollo, the Olympian god who plays and has played such an important part in the mythic story.

For the present essay, I am also on a quest; mine is to discover (if possible) why this exciting drama has received so little reception and is so seldom staged. It is not a tragic script, but Ion does not stand alone in the Euripidean corpus as a drama which flirts with tragedy but concludes on a happy note: Iphigenia in Tauris ends with the rescue and return of the title character, and at the end of Helen the Spartan queen sails off with her husband. We do not find the stage littered with the bodies of the main characters at the end of every Euripidean drama, and such is the case with this play. The recognition of mother and son forms the happy end of Ion; together they go to Athens where the lost boy found will fulfill his destiny as the gods intended. Despite its happy ending, Ion is seldom granted a chorus, much less an audience for contemporary worldwide dramatic productions based on the ancient Greek text nor does the play appear in other forms of art based on the classical tradition.

A quest is a journey toward a goal. The best-known literature of ancient Greece and Rome is based on the idea of a quest-journey: Odysseus seeks for his return to Ithaca, Jason sails to obtain the Golden Fleece, and Aeneas sets out to find a new homeland and ends up on the banks of the Tiber. In the post-classical world, literature often tells the story of a person's quest for a sacred object. The most famous is perhaps the quest for the Holy Grail, a theme that is best known in the versions told by the 18th-century renowned English poet Alfred Lord Tennyson and composer Richard Wagner and continues in ever

changing form to its most recent expression in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003).

Usually a quest involves the hero in distant travel in which he must overcome many obstacles. In Euripides' *Ion*, however, the quest-journey is an emotional one, made to a well-known destination and Creusa and Xuthus face no risks in making a trip to Delphi. Accompanied by an old servant and a band of Athenian maiden tourists, Creusa and Xuthus arrive at the earth's center as pilgrims participating in the oracular festival of consultation. There each will ask Apollo a question: Creusa wants to learn about the son she bore after the deity raped her, while Xuthus wants to know if he will forever remain without an heir.

Oracular responses form the background of the action in many Greek dramas. The Delphic oracle behind Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* creates the play's compelling interest and devastating tragedy. Oracles also inform the action of those plays based on the myth of Agamemnon and his daughter. While in no extant ancient play do we actually hear the divine command, we hear or see that the king carries out Artemis' demand. It is worth noting that in all these texts the commanding divinity is never shown; generally speaking, characters and audience alike come to know from seers the oracular pronouncements behind the action.

The belief that the gods' commands and actions are valid and probably true forms a basic tenet of Greek myth and hence Greek drama. In *Ion* there is a new dimension to the standard, in that here we see an Apollo who let the mortal woman whom he raped and abandoned live her life in doubt and despair, a god who openly deceives a man asking him a simple question, and a divinity who lacks the courage to face those whom he has wronged and deceived. No command has been issued to Creusa, Xuthus, or Ion: these mortals are on their own in their quest to find any answers.

We do not know how this play was received by the audience of 5th-century BC Athens, but the play has gained little attention in the post-classical world.¹ Finally, however, this play, after lying long untouched by directors and producers, was noticed in the last decade of the 20th and the opening years of 21st centuries. Nevertheless, its production history remains short, although

1 Gibert (2013) 420 lists several adaptations in the 1700s and 1800s, and notes Hilda Doolittle's adaptation (*Ion*) of 1937. T. S. Eliot claims that his *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) is based on Euripides' *Ion*, but, in my opinion, even those familiar with the Greek play cannot easily see the relationship.

Ion has been seen more often than, for example, *Phoenician Women*, *Suppliant Women* or the Heracles plays.

The most recent staging of *Ion* was that presented by the American Shakespeare Company in Washington, D.C., in the spring of 2009. David Lan's translation was offered in a lively production, advertised with the tag line "The Greek Tragedy with a Happy Ending" and with posters that seemed to suggest the characters of the Greek drama were going to the beach. The poster featured the Chorus, which in this production was dressed in summer travel attire and the five young women lived up to the tourist atmosphere of Euripides' original Chorus. Director Ethan McSweeney had determined to treat the ancient play as a contemporary event, a play in which the audience will not know what is to happen next. The text had not been brought to the American stage for decades, and both Lan and McSweeney (almost) believed they had found a new ancient play. As the drama advanced towards its happy ending, there was very little sorrow in it and a good amount of humor. While Lisa Harrow as Creusa wept as she told her story, her words did not arouse any real tragic pain. The Queen's perhaps justifiable anger toward Apollo was in this production extended by both Queen and Chorus to anger against men in general, a choice which rather altered the theme of the play. Directors frequently have difficulty presenting Greek deities on stage but McSweeney seemed to find an appropriate medium: while Hermes was a sprightly modern and conversational youth, Athena's metallic appearance reminded the audience that this was, in fact, an ancient Greek drama set in a world neither past nor present. McSweeney's costume choice would remind the knowledgeable viewer of the bronze deity standing at the center of the ancient Acropolis, whose gleaming spear could be seen, we are told, from the Isthmus of Corinth, while audience members who had traveled to Greece would perhaps recall the magnificent bronze statue of the deity found in the Piraeus. All would naturally accept her appearance as the almost *de rigueur* arrival of a *deus ex machina* in many a Greek play.

However, the Washington staging of David Lan's translation of Euripides' *Ion* was not its first production. Previously, in the fall of 1994, his script was offered at The Pit in the Barbican Theatre in London by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC, hereafter). Oddly enough, in that year theatregoers of London could see two productions of Euripides' play, when the Actors Touring Company opted to stage Kenneth McLeish's translation of the drama which he titled *Ion. The Lost Boy Found*. The English version was co-produced with a Greek company, *Piramatiki Skini Tis Techris* (Experimental Stage of Art), the leading theatre company of Thessaloniki. It was first staged in Cambridge before opening at the Lyric Theatre in London. These two productions of *Ion*,

as a play so rarely staged, attracted considerable critical attention from both drama critics and classical scholars. There exist lengthy and insightful reviews of these productions both online and in print, but a few notes from the two longer of these reviews are in order here.²

In his review of *Ion. The Lost Boy Found*, Niall Slater declared that there was much to like in the production of this play which seemed to be “startlingly modern.” He praised the cast overall, although missing the familiar comedy when Xuthus was played here as a more sympathetic figure, less of a buffoon. Although casting issues changed the gender of the man servant to a nurse, Slater argues that the change seemed natural and even necessary: would the queen have told her story to a man? The recognition scene was so staged that the emotion of the characters was closely tied to the set, thus creating a “conscious reminiscence of Michelangelo’s *Pietà*.” Slater was not happy with the final scene, the appearance of the *deus ex machina*, that sudden descend of a deity to the stage. He asserts that the director intended Athena to be an unsatisfactory resolution to the play: her costume, her “cackling laugh,” and her diction suggested that she cared not about the mortals whom she was addressing. Slater suggests the director’s intent was to have the characters appease the goddess and “get out of her sight as quickly as possible.” Many viewers, however, familiar with Euripides’ play, might ponder Athena’s appearance at all: was she here because Apollo was too ashamed to appear? While that is, perhaps, a common interpretation, I suggest that the goddess was brought into the play at this point to remind the audience of the myth’s larger purpose: Ion must eventually go to Athens.

Sallie Goetsch reviewed both the Cambridge performance and the Barbican production.³ Goetsch found David Lan’s translation, done by the RSC at the Barbican, “marked by a naturalistic literalism which diminished the play’s power, making it less, rather than more, universal, harder and not easier to relate to the play and the characters.” Hers is an interesting comment, as Lan himself has said that he hoped his translation would show that he has been “simply the medium by which Euripides has reached across the centuries.”⁴ While Goetsch found some things to like in both productions, there was much she did not care for. She, like Slater, found the recognition scene in the MacLeish translation compelling; also, like Slater, she found the final *deus ex machina* disappointing. She did not care for the RSC’s choice to play many of the scenes for laughs, while the interpretation of Lan’s script, Goetsch writes,

2 Slater (1994); Goetsch (1994–1995).

3 Goetsch (1994–1995).

4 Lan (2008–2009) 24.

created a production that “failed either to be tragedy or to assert its status as a new dramatic form.” It is worth noting here that much of what Goetsch did not like in the RSC’s presentation changed when David Lan’s translation was done in Washington in 2009. While it was not a tragedy there either, there was more to like in the play under McSweeney’s direction. The 2009 production was lively, fast-paced, and played as a contemporary drama: there seemed to be no attempt to link the action to its ancient history. The American Shakespeare Company’s staging successfully played Euripides’ script as a modern play.

After the unique situation of two *Ions* in the same season in 1994, the play basically faded from the boards until the already mentioned Washington D.C. production in 2009, and there has not had a major run since then. Euripides’ *Ion* has not attracted the attention of main stage directors—or producers—for presentation in large commercial venues since 2009 nor did it draw their attention in the years preceding the Washington production.

However, *Ion* was not totally forgotten by those who work in the non-traditional theatres. In recent years there have been a few brief presentations of the play, each so different that it is worthwhile to include all of them here. In the late spring of 2004 *Ion* was staged at the Mercury Theater in Colchester.⁵ The publicity poster was odd: a picture of a naked child standing in the sea. In this production the setting was apparently almost as important as the action, for the shape of the acting space was modeled on the ancient *theatron*, while the ending was particularly bizarre when Apollo appeared as a cascading stream of sand. In the fall of 2009, two actors opened a riff on the *Ion* at an Off-Broadway theatre, New World Stages. Robert Stanton and Daniel Jenkins staged *Love Child*, in which the two men with two chairs on a bare stage tell a ridiculous story about how they are caught in a skewed production of Euripides’ play. They take the audience with them on stage, back stage, and through both the ancient characters and their modern players; sometimes they are in the audience watching the production.⁶ In May 2009, a group of three actors from the Boxcar Theatre in San Francisco presented a pared down version of *Ion* outside, using parks and fountains across the city, only spreading a sheet for an acting space.⁷ All seven parts were played by those three actors, and no role was tied to only one actor, with various props helping the audience to understand who was playing whom when. Indeed the reviewer suggests watching the props, not the actors, to know which character an actor is currently playing. The cast apparently believed that *Ion*’s plot was familiar to its San Francisco

5 Sharp (2004).

6 Genzlinger (2009).

7 Taylor (2009).

audience. Finally, in April 2011, the American Conservatory Theater Master of Fine Arts Program Class offered a weekend run of *Ion* at the Zeum in (again) San Francisco.⁸ The concept for the production veered far away from Euripides' text, focusing rather on the issues of abandoned children and set in an "in an America when gender roles and power dynamics were beginning to change." Apparently program notes gave the audience background information on Euripides' play, allowing the players to present their spin on the ancient text. The director asserted that "by connecting the ancient play to a more familiar context, the production hopes to bring out for a modern audience the innate humanity of Euripides' original text." Through the plot line of *Ion*, the intent here was to focus on the difficult issues faced by pregnant women in the 1950s.

We see that with the exception of these few short runs, Euripides' *Ion* has been seldom staged in the past two decades. Clearly the play has had little appeal to translators, directors, or producers. Why is this so? It cannot be just the scene-setting introduction by a deity, for in many of Euripides' plays the opening lines are spoken by a god. Apollo begins *Alcestitis*, Aphrodite foretells the action in *Hippolytus*, Athena and Poseidon set the scene in *Trojan Women*, and Dionysus opens *Bacchant Women*. Nor can the closing appearance of the *deus ex machina* be what stops current productions, for, again, gods "from the machine" are not rare in Euripidean drama. It might be noted, however, that contemporary audiences seldom accept those gods' words, although I do find it odd that modern directors/producers fear their audiences will not accept those sudden salvations, when virtually every TV drama and many stage plays show the sudden arrival of the "good guys" to solve a desperate situation, and, indeed, are expected to do so.

Ion tells the story of the lost child found. The plot is not unique to this Greek play, for playwrights from Shakespeare to Wilde have used the theme and their plays continue to be popular. From the appearance of John Gielgud in *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 1939, that play has been staged dozens of times in major theatres, and one could not begin to count the number of high school or college productions. No one doubts the possibilities of discovered identity in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *Comedy of Errors*. So it is not that theme which has kept Euripides' *Ion* off the boards.

Perhaps the play has lacked recognition because the deities of *Ion* are not, according to scholars and especially to directors, the grand Olympians the contemporary world expects to see in a Greek tragedy. Apollo's reticent, if not almost shameful, behavior arouses the ire of many readers of the play.

8 Kitchens (2011).

Although it does seem that he has guided the action behind the scenes, his earlier disregard of Creusa's suffering, his odd method of bringing Xuthus and Ion together, and, finally, his refusal to appear to his petitioners at his own temple do little to enhance his image. An ambiguous god who deceives those who come to him may be difficult for a contemporary audience to accept. However, while few can argue that Apollo in *Ion* is a deity worthy of honor, few, if any, of Euripides' gods fulfill common modern expectations of how a god should act. To mention a few examples, Aphrodite and Artemis in *Hippolytus* think nothing of using mortals in their jealous battles; neither Athena nor Poseidon in *Trojan Women* care that Troy will be destroyed; and Dionysus' callous destruction of the Theban royal family in the *Bacchant Women* hardly compels praise, although the deity does compel recognition.

Scholarly opinion shows a general agreement that *Ion* is not really a tragedy, and if modern producers want a Greek tragic drama, they would not select this unusual story with its happy ending. *Ion* usually takes its place as a tragicomedy in standard listings of Greek drama, although some scholars have argued that the play can be read as almost a true tragedy since Creusa's suffering has been long and real.⁹

What is more, while the chorus is often the most difficult aspect of ancient drama for those producing Greek tragedies, the Chorus of *Ion* is one of the most easily "updated" of any. The young women who accompany the queen are there as tourists and their words (as has often been noted and always so played) are those of anyone visiting a famous site. What makes *Ion*'s Chorus unusual is their active participation in the plot by telling Creusa an outright lie that activates her latent anger. But this breaking of tradition should not distress a modern audience, who do not know it is a rare occurrence.

Why, then, is *Ion* so seldom staged? We do not find the play rejected because the plot is not believable, for modern scripts equally fantastic are often produced. Non-belief in Olympian deities does not hinder a contemporary audience from enjoying an ancient script. The chorus of *Ion* is better integrated into the action and their presence on stage is no more intrusive than that of a Gilbert and Sullivan band of pirates in *The Pirates of Penzance* or able sailors in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Finally we can note there is considerably more on-stage action in *Ion* than in many an ancient script: Euripides has created a lively drama.

My quest to answer the question above leads me to three possible conclusions. First, the *Ion* has a happy ending and thus does not fit into a modern

9 Lee (1996) 85–109. See, also, Swift (2008) 9, who writes: "The play explores ideas about family, religion, identity and knowledge, and despite its playful tone, these themes are handled in a serious and thought-provoking way."

audience's expectation for a Greek tragedy. When we review the Greek dramas that are staged again and again, we find that they fit into several broad themes. The most frequently offered Greek dramas are those that speak out against war. For decades *Trojan Women* was considered the best text to carry that message, and in the later decades of the 20th century the *Iphigenia at Aulis* was added to that repertoire. The suffering of women caught up in men's wars, is (alas) a constant in the post-classical world.

A second reason for *Ion*'s lack of appeal, perhaps, might be that it lacks any one powerful character. *Medea* is staged a surprising number of times because many an actress wants to play the title role. The plot of the play is difficult and hardly sets an example. Nevertheless, the powerful characterization of the title character continues to attract audiences. *Hippolytus* is seldom staged, but is brought to the boards more frequently than *Ion*, probably because Phaedra is such a fascinating character that actresses are drawn to the love-tortured queen. All of the women of *Trojan Women* provide strong roles in the oft-produced anti-war play. But Creusa, although on stage throughout and regardless of the emotion with which she is played, cannot rival a Medea, a Phaedra, or any of the women of Troy.

The third and most significant reason that *Ion* lacks a modern following, I think, is the basic premise of the play: its myth is a foundation myth. The theme that would have made Euripides' drama attractive to its Athenian audience has little appeal to a modern one. The citizens of 5th-century BC Athens would have delighted in seeing their Ionian heritage traced back to a god, however that lineage came about. But a founding myth is of little interest to a person attending the theatre in the contemporary world. Most do not know—or care—about any connection between Athenians and Ionians, even if they can recognize the latter name.

A founding myth does not show the dangers of excessive belief as displayed in *Hippolytus*, the anger of a woman scorned as explored in *Medea*; it does not wring the heart in pity as does the suffering of the women in *Trojan Women*. A founding myth does not compel an audience to grieve at the brave acceptance that Iphigenia displays at Aulis. It does not illustrate the bold action of Heracles who accepts responsibilities for terrible deeds done by his hand although not his mind. Finally, no production of *Ion* could leave its audience as deeply drained, as deeply moved by pity and fear, as any production of *Bacchant Women*.

In sum, then, Euripides' *Ion*, when brought to the stage, is chosen as something novel, something rather fluffy, perhaps, something that gives a rather

good afternoon or evening of theatre. It is not chosen as a representative of the great canon of Greek tragic drama, for in no way does it fit into common considerations of what makes an ancient play tragic—and able, at the same time, to communicate a message across the centuries.

As a drama of a quest, *Ion* shows its characters finding that for which they (even inadvertently) were seeking. Xuthus finds a son he did not know he was looking for, Ion finds a mother whom until that day he had not known he wished to find, and Creusa discovers that the god whom she had thought had abandoned her had in fact saved their son. Certainly this is all good drama and makes for an exciting story.

The lost boy found is a charming story, but—so it seems—in today's theatre directors, actors, producers and audiences expect more than a charming story however cleverly told.

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PART 5

The Tragic Side of Heracles' Life



Heracles

Rosie Wyles

Euripides' Heracles, first produced ca. 415 BC,¹ explores themes of violence and heroism, family and nostos ("homecoming"), madness, identity, divine influence and the redemptive quality of philia ("friendship"). In this tragedy, Heracles' wife, Megara, together with his sons and his father, Amphitryon, are threatened with death by the tyrant Lycus. Heracles arrives back from the completion of his Labors, just in time to save them and kill Lycus. In a dramatic turn of events, however, Iris and Lyssa (personification of Madness) appear and follow Hera's orders to send Heracles mad. He kills his wife and children, but with the support of his friend Theseus finds a way to continue to live. The challenging nature of the play's themes has imprinted itself on the pattern of its reception over the ages: it has, "always surfaced in historically charged periods" and despite infrequent staging has "had an undeniable impact on the history of ideas".² For this reason Euripides' Heracles holds a distinctive place within the story of the widespread popularity and reception, from antiquity to the present day, of Heracles as a mythological character in general.³

In Literature

One of the first extant poetic responses to Euripides' play is the Hellenistic poem *Megara*, attributed to either the 3rd-century BC bucolic poet Theocritus or his 2nd-century successor Moschus. Although this dialogue poem diverges from the Euripidean treatment of the myth, reverting to the alternative

* I would like to thank everyone at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (hereafter APGRD), Oxford, especially Edith Hall,—without their ground-breaking work, I could not have written this chapter. I also extend my thanks to the Editors of this volume.

1 Heracles is dated to this year on metrical considerations; see Bond (1981) xxx–xxxii.

2 Riley (2008) 4. Riley's magisterial work has proved invaluable—I am much indebted to it.

3 The importance of this theme in general was recognized long ago by Galinsky (1972) (whose study treats adaptations of the hero from Homer to the 20th century); more recently its enormity and extraordinary significance has been emphasized through the major research project ("The Hercules Project") undertaken at the University of Leeds.

placement of the murders of the children (before the Labors) and leaving Megara alive, *Heracles* haunts the poem as a significant intertext.⁴ A more direct response to the play, in parodic form, may have been produced by the 3rd-century BC *phylax*-play writer, Rhinthon of Syracuse, in his *Herakles* or *Amphitryon*, which were produced in a contemporary period to *Megara*.⁵ In the following two centuries, the major accounts of the madness of Heracles by the mythographer Apollodorus of Athens, and the historians Nicolaus of Damascus and Diodorus Siculus are not primarily dependent on Euripides since they offer different versions of the myth (but again they may serve to draw attention to the Euripidean version).⁶

The most influential adaptation of Euripides' play, from antiquity or beyond, appeared in Roman literature when the 1st-century AD Stoic philosopher, Seneca, wrote *Hercules Furens* ("The Mad Hercules"/"The Madness of Hercules").⁷ Seneca's adaptation made significant changes to the Euripidean original which shifted the emphasis of its dramatic interest.⁸ It was no longer a play about the arbitrary cruelty of the gods and redeeming quality of human friendship, but now examined, from a Stoic viewpoint, the consequences of excessive emotions and behavior. To achieve this shift of focus, Seneca replaced *Amphitryon*'s opening speech with a prologue by Juno, in which she explicitly cites Heracles' excess as the cause for her anger and invokes the Eumenides against him. Although this suggests an element of divine involvement, importantly Seneca does not include the figures of Lyssa or Iris in his adaptation.⁹ These figures had made it clear in the Euripidean play that the madness was sent by Hera. In Seneca's version, however, Heracles arrives with Theseus and we witness him go mad, then pursue both Megara and his children, before taking them inside to kill them. All this happens without the intervention of

4 Above all it is evoked in Megara's wish to have been killed by an arrow, ll. 29–31 (as she is in Euripides' play, *Heracles* 998–1000).

5 Sadly almost nothing remains of either play: Kassel and Austin (2001) 262–3; see, also, Riley (2008) 46.

6 Apollodorus, *Library* 2.4.12. Nicolaus fr. 13 (in Jacoby 1961: 339–40 with Jacoby 1963: 238–9), and Diodorus, *Library of History* 4.11.1–2: see Pache (2004) 54–7; Riley (2008) 47–9.

7 It is sometimes dated to just before 54 AD: see Fitch (2002) 12. There is no evidence (except, perhaps, the strength of the tragic Heracles in the iconographic record) for a Latin version of *Heracles* before Seneca, though the hero featured as a character in other Roman plays: see Riley (2008) 49–50.

8 See Shelton (1978) 11–6 for an overview of the changes made by Seneca.

9 Nor, in Seneca, does Athena intervene to stop him killing *Amphitryon* (rather fatigue prevents this death); again this encourages the action to be viewed as independent from divine interference.

externalized forces, so it is Heracles who is responsible and who embodies the irrational (rather than the gods). Nor is Heracles' redemption achieved, as it is in Euripides, through the appearance of Theseus and assertion of friendship, but, when all else fails, through the counter-threat of suicide from Amphitryon prompting Heracles' *pietas* ("sense of duty") to his father.¹⁰ The result is a tragedy which updated Greek concepts, such as help your friends and harm your enemies, with Roman ones, such as *pietas*, and addressed Roman, and specifically Stoic, concerns with excess.

This re-working marked a significant turning point in the reception of *Heracles* as the Senecan changes "began a process of reasoning the madness and psychologizing the hero which transformed the story's Euripidean essence".¹¹ This Senecan re-interpretation has subsequently acted as a filter to responses to Euripides. This has produced adaptations of the Greek play which are more engaged with the exploration of the psychological process of madness inherent to Seneca's version. *Hercules Furens*, therefore, can be argued to have dominated the reception of Euripides' play. Yet, the scenario and scope of Seneca's work owes such a debt to the Euripidean archetype, that this Roman tragedy (and responses to it) cannot fail to bring attention to the Greek original. In what follows I therefore treat responses to the Senecan drama as an essential part of the reception of *Heracles*.¹²

The Second Sophistic writer, Philostratus (2nd century AD) gives us the final significant literary response to Euripides' work within antiquity. In one of his works, he offers a description of a picture showing the madness of Heracles.¹³ The details of the image correspond strikingly with those given in the messenger speech in Euripides' tragedy (ll. 922–1015). These details include, for example, Heracles' delusion in believing that he is killing Eurystheus' children, the sacrificial victims standing by the altar, the use of the bow and arrows (although the club is omitted), the foam on his chin and maniac smile (cf. laughter in Euripides, *Heracles* 935). In fact the literary debt is explicitly acknowledged through the narrator of the piece interrupting his own description of the picture to add that he has heard Heracles in a play of Euripides,

10 On *pietas*; see Galinsky (1972) 173. On change in dramatic force and meaning in this ending, see Wyles (2008) 246–85.

11 Riley (2008) 45 (for quotation) and 51–91; she identifies the Neo-Senecan trend as dominant in the modern reception of Euripides' work. See, also, Galinsky (1972) 167–84.

12 This is not to detract from the important distinction that Riley makes between Euripidean and Senecan conception of the play: see Riley (2008) 357.

13 *Imagines* 2.23. On the *Imagines* in general, see the forthcoming study by Michael Squire and Jas Elsner.

driving a chariot, plying the goad and threatening Eurystheus.¹⁴ A full appreciation of Philostratus' descriptive and allusive technique here depends on knowledge of Euripides' play and suggests its cultural familiarity as a literary model in this period.

The madness of Heracles was radically re-interpreted in the 1464 epic *Recueil des hystoires de Troyes* ("Tales of Troy") by the French writer Raoul LeFèvre, chaplain to Philip III. In this romanticization of the story, Heracles is presented as a medieval knight who only kills Megara after being tricked into thinking that she has been unfaithful with Lycus.¹⁵ This work was extraordinarily popular, in both French and English (it was translated by William Caxton in 1474), which would have ensured widespread familiarity with this version of the episode.¹⁶ In 1504, however, Euripides' version gained the opportunity to rival LeFèvre's conceptualization, as *Heracles* had been discovered and published in Greek. It was included in the second volume of the first edition of the complete set of Euripides' plays (then known), printed by the Aldine press in Venice.¹⁷ By 1541, it was possible to access a Latin version of Euripides' text in the edition of collected plays published in Basel.¹⁸ The bilingual edition of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* by Jasper Heywood, fellow of All Souls college, Oxford (published in London in 1561), offered the first English translation of the Senecan play. This edition stands as a landmark in the reception of both Euripides' *Heracles* and Seneca's adaptation of it.¹⁹ Meanwhile Euripides' play was making an impact

14 The details of the imagined chariot and goad correspond precisely to Euripides, *Heracles* 947–9 (= the messenger speech). A sophisticated game is being played with the reader in the phrasing of the narrator's assertion, since in this literary nod to the model for his description, Philostratus also acknowledges that Euripides himself describes an image in the messenger speech which the audience "sees" in their imagination when hearing it; in other words Philostratus invites the reflection that Euripides offers a form of precedent for *Imagines*-writing.

15 Seneca had already suggested Lycus' interest in Megara in his adaptation: see Griffiths (2006) 119.

16 On LeFèvre's and other medieval treatments of Heracles, see Galinsky (1972) 191–5 and (2010).

17 The first volume of this set was published in 1503, *Heracles*, however, had not been discovered in time to be included and so was added to the second volume: see Garland (2004) 106–7. For a table of Greek and Latin editions of Euripides in circulation before 1600, see Hirsch (1964) 141–2.

18 Hirsch (1964) 142.

19 Riley (2008) 111–4. There was not a vernacular translation of Euripides' *Heracles* by this date: see Hirsch (1964) 145 and below. A detailed list of French translations and adaptations of the Senecan is in Riley (2008) 114. See also Jung (1966), Tolbin (1967–1968) and, above all, Caigny (2011).

on the literature of the period. In 1596 the second edition of the English poet Edmund Spenser's epic poem *Faerie Queene*, was published and with it, in one of the additional books now included, appeared the Heracleian-styled knight Artegall. The extensive use of Heracles made by Spenser in this poem in general and Euripidean elements, familiar from *Heracles*, in the characterization and narrative treatment of Artegall in particular have been acknowledged in scholarship.²⁰ While the Heracleian lack of self-control shown by Artegall may have more in common with Seneca's conceptualization of the hero, the acceptance of his destiny and the engagement with the motif of redemption, which this allows, has clear Euripidean resonance. The "striking similarity between Spenser's and Euripides' view of Herakles", has been claimed to be the result of "the creative life that is immanent in any myth" rather than a direct debt to the ancient author.²¹ Spenser's rigorous classical education at the Merchant Taylor's school, however, and its active encouragement to exploit classical texts as models, make a closer relationship with the original (or a derivation of it in the mythological handbooks and dictionaries in use) a distinct possibility.²²

The appreciation of Spenser's engagement with Euripides depended on a readership who could access the text in either Greek or Latin. The potential impact of such literary engagements and responses to the play multiplied once the text was accessible through translations into the vernacular. The first vernacular translations of *Heracles*, however, appeared only when a translation of the completed works of Euripides was produced in each respective language. The first such undertaking in any modern language was Italian and was published between 1743–1754 in Padua. It was the work of Michangelo Carmeli, Professor of Oriental languages at the University of Padua. *Heracles* appeared in Volume 18 (published in 1753).²³ Almost thirty years later, two complete works of Euripides translated into English were published; one by the country schoolmaster and curate, Robert Potter (London, 1781–1783; *Heracles* was published in the first volume) and the other by the scholar Michael Wodhull (Cambridge, 1782; *Hercules Distracted* appeared in the fourth volume). While across the channel, in the same decade, a French translation of *Heracles* with comments appeared in the ninth volume (1787) of Pierre Prévost's revised edition of Brumoy's *Théâtre des Grecs* ("Greek Theatre").²⁴ Pierre Brumoy had in

20 Galinsky (1972) 206 and 209–11. Artegall appears in book 5 of the poem.

21 Galinsky (1972) 212.

22 He learnt both Greek and Latin: see Burrow (2001) 217–8.

23 Hoffmann (1833) 199.

24 Prévost had not included *Heracles* in his translations of Euripidean plays (published between 1782–1797). His translation and analysis of it appeared, in fact, in his revised edition of Brumoy's work: Prévost (1787) 169–329.

fact offered a synopsis and analysis, in French, of both Euripides' and Seneca's play in the first edition of his work.²⁵ Finally the equivalent work appeared in German, translated by F. H. Bothe and published in Berlin between 1800–1803; *Heracles* was included in the third volume of this collection (published 1802).²⁶

While Bothe's translation into the vernacular was making Euripides' *Heracles* generally accessible in Germany, another translator of the ancient tragedians, the German lyric poet Friedrich Hölderlin, was wrestling with his own engagement with Heracles' madness in his Pindaric-styled ode on the Rhine, *Der Rhein*, written between 1801–1808 and published in 1808.²⁷ The poem presents Heracles' conflicted status as demigod and in this sense constitutes a forerunner for Frank Wedekind's later representation of him as an Olympian misfit.²⁸ The madness is presented as a punishment for Heracles' attempts to exceed his human bounds and in this sense the poem is closer to the Senecan rather than Euripidean treatment of the myth.²⁹

Going back to England, in 1794, Gilbert Wakefield, an English scholar and religious controversialist, published *Heracles* in his two-volume edition of Greek tragedies, deliberately selected since they had not typically been studied in schools in England. One potential result of this was the rare 19th century staging of it as Reading Greek play in Berkshire, in 1818.³⁰ There seems to have been something in the air, as a few years after the production in Berkshire, Lord Byron (1788–1824) references *Hercules Furens* twice in his masterpiece *Don Juan*. Firstly he mentions that his blue-stocking Miss Araminta Smith translated *Hercules Furens* (Canto 7, published 1823) and later he returns to

25 Brumoy (1730) Vol. 2: 703–37; this enabled familiarity with both plays (in outline) to the vernacular reader in 1730, i.e., even earlier than Carmeli's Italian translation.

26 For publishing details of all these vernacular translations, see Hoffmann (1833) 218–20. For an overview of the translation of Euripides into English, see Classe (2000) 424–9; the comment that the “two Heracles plays are rarely read or translated” (425) is fair in relative terms.

27 *Der Rhein* was published in *Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung* 7 July 1808: Reid (1993) 1: 531. For Hölderlin's engagement with Heracles in this poem and his other works, see Galinsky (1972) 252–60.

28 Galinsky (1972) 256. On Wedekind's *Herakles*, see below, p. 568.

29 Galinsky (1972) 257; I do not agree with Galinsky's suggestion here that this is the result of the “inherent dynamic life of the myth rather than direct imitation”. I would say rather that the many layers of interpretation through the reception history of both Euripides' and Seneca' plays make some aspects culturally inherent and accessible without an act of conscious imitation necessarily taking place.

30 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 253–4.

Hercules Furens (Canto 11, published 1824) in a simile for his own temper. The references to this play in Byron's work are unusual for the time, though they may perhaps be explained by its inclusion in Wakefield's edition together with his reputation as a polemist.³¹ I would suggest, however, that the 1818 Reading production of *Heracles* may have played an important part in influencing Byron's choice. Since Mary Russell Mitford, who reviewed this production, was acquainted with a very close friend of Byron, interest in the play may therefore have been passed by word of mouth through this common acquaintance.³² If this is the case, then it reveals the far-reaching impact of the 1818 production and the closeness of relationship between reception in literature and on stage.

The next significant milestone in literary history for *Heracles* is the translation by the 19th-century English poet, Robert Browning, which he embedded in his verse-poem *Aristophanes' Apology*, published in 1875. Browning describes *Heracles* as "the consummate Tragedy" (*Aristophanes' Apology* 3526) and uses the translation as a crowning piece in the defense of Euripides. The format and subject of the poem, however, were off-putting to its immediate public and Browning's translation has subsequently been the "casualty of serious scholarly neglect".³³ In the context of Browning's other translations of tragedy (Euripides' *Alcestis*, 1871, and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, 1877), his *Heracles* can be judged the most successful since "it comes closest to achieving the impossible, namely the transmission of much of the linguistic power of the original text simultaneous with the creation of a highly readable work of English poetry which is seldom strained or inelegant".³⁴ It may be that after this recent re-evaluation of it, and the renewed performance interest in this play, Browning's translation is destined for greater appreciation in the 21st century.

In the two decades following Browning's translation of *Heracles*, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, a renowned German philologist both in his own lifetime and still today, produced an edition and translation of this Euripidean play which would prove to be a watershed in the modern reception of both *Heracles* and its playwright.³⁵ His landmark edition of *Heracles* appeared, in two volumes, in 1889, while his translation was staged in Vienna (in the Theater in der Josefstadt) on 6th January 1902. The impact of both cannot be overstated:

31 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 254 n. 42; Riley (2008) 153 n. 11.

32 She claims this acquaintance six years before the performance of *Hercules* in a letter dated to 25 May 1812: see Mitford (2013) 153. A later letter, dated October 1821, confirms the continued closeness of her circles to Byron's: see Mitford (2013) 864–5.

33 Riley (2008) 186–90 (quotation on p. 190).

34 Riley (2008) 199, and, for analysis of the translation, 199–206.

35 Riley (2008) 207.

the edition invited a re-interpretation of Heracles as a hero suffering from a pre-existing disorder. The idea of this latent psychosis enabled the rationalization, internalization, and psychological analysis of his mania. This together with the theatre production opened the door to the overtly psychoanalytical treatments of Greek tragedy on stage which followed.³⁶

The psychologizing approach was not the only strand in the early 20th century reception of *Heracles*. The examples of American poet George Cabot Lodge's *Herakles* (1908), Irish poet William Butler Yeats's *On Baile's Strand* (staged 1904, revised 1906) and German playwright Frank Wedekind's *Herakles* (written 1917, first performed in Prinzregenten Theater, Munich 1919)—which respond both to the positioning of Heracles between man and god in the play and to the intellectual currents of Friederich Nietzsche's "superman"—have also been explored in scholarship.³⁷ Of the three, Wedekind's *Herakles* relates in the most striking way to the Euripidean play.³⁸ In place of the consolation in humanity at the end of the 5th-century tragedy, Wedekind uses engagement with the tradition of the mystery play (and the implied analogy with Christ) to explore Heracles' struggle to be human in the face of his own knowledge of his demi-god status.³⁹ Unlike Euripides' hero who finds a resolution to his crisis in the *philia* of Theseus and the ability it gives him to continue living, Wedekind's ends with a sense of failure hanging over Heracles' death and apotheosis. The context for the writing and performance of this play is important and suggests that: "what Wedekind seems to be advocating is the urgent need, in a dehumanized post-war world, for ordinary human beings and not superheroes."⁴⁰ At the same time, Wedekind's vision of Heracles was not entirely the product of the war and it had already been anticipated even before the war's outbreak in 1910 in *Hercule* by the Belgian poet, co-founder of the School of Symbolism, Emile Verhaeren.⁴¹

At the beginning of the Second World War, Heracles again offered a model through which to think about ideals of heroism as well as society's relationship with Classics in general. This is shown in the series of short stories *The Labours of Hercules: The Legend of Poirot's retirement* (1939–1940) by the English crime novelist Agatha Christie.⁴² Her Belgian detective, Poirot (whose first name is,

36 This is argued by Riley (2008) 207–51.

37 Galinsky (1972) 236–40; Riley (2008) 252–78.

38 David Lodge, well-known literary critic, explicitly based his work on Diodorus Siculus (*Library of History* 4. 10–11 and 15): see Riley (2008) 259.

39 Riley (2008) 273.

40 Riley (2008) 277. See also Galinsky (1972) 239–40.

41 Published in *Les Rythmes Souverains*, Paris: see Galinsky (1972) 276–9.

42 Griffiths (2006) 123–5.

in fact, “Hercule”), faces the challenge of solving twelve cases each linked to a Heracleian Labor and in the process reflects on the nature of heroism (by thinking explicitly about the Euripidean hero). It was another war which sparked the next major dramatic engagement with Euripides’ play, as the American poet and statesman Archibald MacLeish (1892–1982) unapologetically appropriated it, writing his own *Herakles: A play in Verse* (1967), to respond to the Cold War context and to demonstrate the destructiveness of science. In the 1970s, MacLeish’s *Herakles* could be deemed “the most deliberate attempt to point out the relevance of the myth to modern times”.⁴³ This treatment, though very much a product of its age, followed in the footsteps of Seneca and Wedekind in using Heracles’ labors to express “doubts about the validity of any human accomplishment”.⁴⁴ Crucial to this vision was both the retention of the Euripidean sequence (destruction comes after the success in ridding the world of monsters) and the Senecan approach to culpability (Lyssa was omitted).⁴⁵ This work, which had been begun in 1959, was completed as a text for performance in 1965, and the final revised version was published in 1967.⁴⁶

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Millenium Poet, Simon Armitage, wrote *Mister Heracles* (published in London in 2000; staged in 2001 in West Yorkshire playhouse, Leeds). It attempted to incorporate a “vast transhistorical compass” (including deliberate anachronisms to achieve this).⁴⁷ Nevertheless particular preoccupations of this century emerged: concerns over the relentless speed in technological advances, the cultural psychology of militarism and masculinity, and the problem of trained killers adapting to civilian life.⁴⁸ The play can be argued to be predominantly influenced by the Senecan/Wilamowitz approach to the madness; even though Lyssa is retained, her role is significantly mediated.⁴⁹ By contrast, the Canadian poet, writer and academic Anne Carson, in her translation of Euripides’ *Heracles* in 2006, allows her character “Madness” to act as a fully externalized force equivalent to Euripidean Lyssa.⁵⁰ Despite the Senecan approach to madness in MacLeish’s

43 Galinsky (1972) 244; this is unsurprising given MacLeish’s view of poetry as “public speech” and his championing of the encapsulation of contemporary experience in poetry: see Riley (2008) 281–5.

44 Galinsky (1972) 66.

45 Riley (2008) 288.

46 For fuller discussion, see Galinsky (1972) 244–8 and Riley (2008) 285–307.

47 Riley (2008) 313.

48 Riley (2008) 314.

49 Riley (2008) 316–20.

50 This is despite her Preface imposing a hint of Senecan-rooted psychologizing in the description of the hero as ‘brutalized and brutalizing,’ see Carson (2006) 15 with Riley (2008) 311–2.

and Armitage's adaptations, traces of Euripides still remain in the response, found in both, to the original dramatization, problematization and deconstruction of heroic identity.⁵¹

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

An important vase by the Paestan painter Asteas (Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional 11094) and dated to ca. 350 BC, attests the sustained dramatic fascination with the theme of Heracles' madness in art and the influence of Euripides' play in South Italy in the mid 4th century.⁵² Although further representations of Heracles cannot be linked to Euripides' play in the same way as Asteas' vase, the proliferation of art relating to theatrical Heracles and his emergent association with the tragic Muse, Melpomene, who is often shown sporting his costume, is significant. It suggests a strong iconographic tradition fuelling the imagination of those reading or seeing the play (and *vice versa*).⁵³ Much later in the 2nd century AD, the above-mentioned Philostratus' description of a picture showing the madness of Heracles may not have been based on a real picture, but we may infer from this literary work that it was at least plausible that Euripides' *Heracles* might inspire a subject for a painting.⁵⁴

During the Renaissance, Heracles' madness was not a popular subject in art, although the hero himself (depicted at other moments in his mythic cycle) featured extensively.⁵⁵ Heracles' killing of his family was the cause of concern and suggests one reason for the subject being avoided.⁵⁶ The Veronese painter Alessandro Turchi, however, was the exception and dared to paint *Ercole uccide sua moglie Megara e i figli* ("Heracles kills his wife Megara and his children," more generically translated as "The Madness of Hercules") (ca. 1620), now in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich. The dramatic composition focuses on Heracles as he is depicted in

51 Riley (2008) 336–7. See also Griffiths (2006) 128–9 for a summary of both plays' contribution to the reception of *Heracles*.

52 Taplin (2007) 143–5 discusses this calyx-krater and suggests that while it is not directly related to Euripides' *Heracles*, it is "quite likely under its influence".

53 For a fuller discussion (and justification of this assertion): see Wyles (2013) 190–2 with n. 33 for examples of theatrical Heracles in art within antiquity.

54 *Imagines* 2.23, on which see above, pp. 563–4 and n. 13.

55 Bull (2005) 86–140. For a catalogue of instances of the reception of Heracles in the Arts from 1300 to 1990s, see Reid (1993) 1: 515–61, to which this chapter owes much.

56 The Chancellor of Florence, Coluccio Salutati, wrote a treatise on this in response to a friend's concern over how Heracles could go to heaven after such an act: Bull (2005) 86.

full swing (suggested by the dynamic motion in his stance) hurling a child to the ground. Members of the household surround him and are shown looking on at Heracles while they try to protect the other children. The primary point of reference for the image was probably Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, however it would also have been capable of evoking Euripides' play to those who knew it.⁵⁷

At the end of 18th century another Italian artist, this time from Venice, took on the subject of Heracles' madness and family killing and rendered it in terms even more closely related to Euripides' *Heracles*. The neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova (1757–1822) represented the Heracleian killing scene in three works: a sketch entitled *Ercole furioso* ("Hercules raging", now in Bassano, Museo Civico); a painting from 1799 entitled *Ercole saetta i figli* ("Hercules shoots his children", now in Bassano, Museo Civico) and a relief of the same subject and sharing the same title (1803–1804) (Possagno, Gispoteca).⁵⁸ The sketch shows Heracles with his club raised behind his head (cf. Euripides, *Heracles* 992–3) racing towards two young men (his children or one of his sons being helped by a servant?). Meanwhile Amphitryon turns and exclaims (as his gesture suggests) trying to reason with his son as he is reported to have in the messenger speech in Euripides' play (*Heracles* 965–7). This sketch can be set in the context of Canova's treatment of Perseus' battle with the Gorgon and Theseus' against the Sphinx since there are clear parallels in the composition of all three.⁵⁹ For anyone familiar with Canova's oeuvre, therefore, the similarities in representation might invite the comparison of these myths which could suggest either the work of fate in Heracles' actions or the understanding of his action as a misplaced continuation of his heroic battle against monsters. This interpretation resurfaced later in the reception of this play. Euripides is also clearly the archetype behind Canova's painting and relief of Heracles shooting with his bow and arrow at his children.⁶⁰ Again the composition corresponds closely to details which are found in the messenger speech of the play: Amphitryon trying to stop his son, the use of the bow and arrow and the children gathered close to Megara (Euripides, *Heracles* 965–89). Though the representations are broadly similar, the relief (produced about four years after the

57 Riley (2008) 115 suggests Seneca is dominant influence, while Bull (2005) 131–2 takes into account the impact (or otherwise) of Philostratus as an intermediary text. Philostratus, as I have argued above is very closely related to the Euripidean version.

58 Stefani (1992) 59–61 (illustrated no. 73–75). See also details about a wax model on this theme in Reid (1993) 1: 531.

59 Stefani (1992) 59.

60 Stefani (1992) 60 identifies Euripides and "Pindar's ode" as the sources of inspiration; he does not specify which ode. In fact when Pindar mentions the death of the eight children of Megara in *Isthmian* 4. 67–70 he absolves Heracles by implying that they were killed in battle. For the treatment of Heracles in Pindar in general, see Galinsky (1972) 262–4.

painting) includes some important differences which add further to the *pathos* of the scene: Amphitryon's efforts to intervene are more desperate in the relief which shows the dynamic force of his attempt in the detail of his limbs, the child gripping Heracles' leg is placed more prominently (to the front of the leg), the child weeping by Megara's side hides in the folds of her cloak, the altar placed between Heracles and Megara with child praying at it draws attention to the perversity of the act, and finally the arrows are shown distinctly sticking out from two of the corpses. This detail offers a proleptic reference to Heracles' later realization, in the play, of what he has done. This graphic, dynamic and *pathos*-filled composition offers a visual equivalent to the powerful messenger speech in the play and the emotional impact it effects. It is possible that Canova's own life experience, and the loss of his father in his youth, informed his artistic response to this myth and enabled him to understand the disruption of normal family life at its core.⁶¹

Between the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, it is a different moment within the play which offered inspiration to another sculptor, the French André-Joseph Allar. While Allar's focus was on death, it is Heracles' terrible realization after the killing that inspired him. His sculpture *Hercules Discovering his Dead Son*, produced at some time before Allar's death in 1926, is now in the collection of the Musées Municipaux de Toulon. The focus of the piece on the discovery and confrontation of death (rather than madness and killing) is not surprising in light of Allar's oeuvre and the general response to tragedy that it reveals. For example, Allar also sculpted *Hecuba Discovering the Corpse of Polydorus* in 1870 (now in Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseille)⁶² which confirms Allar's particular fascination with these moments of discovery which had first been made poignant by Euripides in his *Heracles* and *Hecuba*. The sculptures reveal an aesthetic affinity with Euripides' plays.⁶³

Music

While direct adaptation of Euripides' *Heracles* in opera are far outnumbered by those enjoying a much closer relationship with *Alcestis* and Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, elements of the play are appropriated in the musical responses to the Heracles' myths. The aesthetic driving the treatment of tragic models in 17th-century musical stage creations results in Megara creeping into the end of the Italian composer Antonio Draghi's *Alceste* ("Alcestis," 1700) as a second

61 Stefani (1992) 60–2.

62 For discussion of Hecuba and Polydorus' episode in Visual Arts, see above, pp. 119–20 and n. 47.

63 On Allar, see Noet (2008).

woman to tempt Admetus.⁶⁴ Megara had already made a musical entry, as wife of Heracles, earlier in the century. For example, she appears in the Italian composer Jacopo Melani's 1661 opera, *Ercole in Tebe* ("Hercules in Thebes"), first performed in Florence for the Medici wedding. It offered its audience an extraordinary mélange of Heracleian myths and included some elements related to Euripides' *Heracles*.⁶⁵ It is possible that the earlier *idillio* composed by Domenico Stiava with libretto by Bartolomeo Beverini, *Hercole perseguitato* ("Hercules Persecuted," 1657) drew more closely on Euripides' play.⁶⁶ Another *Ercole in Tebe* ("Hercules in Thebes") appeared ten years after Melani's (1670–1671) with music by Giovanni Antonio Boretti and Bernado Sabadini. The libretto was written by Giovanni Andrea Moniglia and Aurelio Aureli and it was performed in Teatro San Salvatore, Venice.⁶⁷ The same collaborators (only this time without Boretti who had died in 1672) returned to the theme seventeen years later to produce a revised version, *L'Ercole trionfante* ("Hercules Triumphant"), which was performed in Piacenza in 1688.

Musical responses to Euripides' play span into the 18th century. The original opera produced by the Boretti/Sabadini collaboration *Ercole in Tebe* mentioned above would itself inspire another type of opera (*sing-spiel*) composed by the German composer Christoph Graupner (1683–1760) with libretto by Breymann (who explicitly based it on the libretto by Moniglia).⁶⁸ It was entitled *Il fido amico oder Der getreue Freund Hercules und Theseus* ("The faithful friend or the faithful friends Hercules and Theseus") and was performed in Hamburg where it was also published in 1708. The focus on the friendship between Hercules and Theseus may have been immediately based on *Ercole in Tebe* ("Hercules in Thebes"), but it ultimately went back to Euripides who not only gave it prominence in his tragedy, but is likely to have invented this mythological episode for his play.⁶⁹ Later in the century when the German baroque composer George Friedrich Händel (Oratorio *Hercules*, 1745) turned to this Heracles theme it

64 Librettist Donato Cupeda, performed in Vienna: see Heller (2010) 74–6.

65 As well as the naming of Heracles' wife as Megara, Iris appears at the end of Act 2 in Scenes 12 and 13 (albeit in rather a different capacity from in Euripides' play). It also includes Heracles' encounter with Theseus in the Underworld and proof of their bond of friendship (Act 3, Scene 11), which is an essential part of the mythical, and dramatic, landscape in Euripides' *Heracles*. On this performance, see Riley (2008) 115–6.

66 APGRD database ID 10762; in the following, productions are referenced with their ID numbers from the APGRD database, accessible through: <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk>.

67 Selfridge-Field (2007) 102–3.

68 *Sing-spiel* is a form of 18th-century opera which developed from comic dramatic dialogues interspersed with song.

69 Bond (1971) xxx.

would be Sophocles and Seneca, rather than Euripides, who inspired him.⁷⁰ At the end of the century, however, Euripides' (or perhaps Seneca's) play does seem to have influenced Cordeiro da Silva's *Megara tebana* ("Theban Megara," 1788) performed in the Ribeira palace in Lisbon.⁷¹

The more recent musical engagements with *Heracles* include celebrated music to accompany stage productions of Euripides' play: such as, the music composed by the Greek musician Yorgos Sicilianos (entitled *Hercules Furens*) used for the 1960 performance of the play at Epidaurus.⁷² A more extensive musical undertaking was the opera *Herakles* televised in Czechia in 1987 and inspired in part by Euripides' play.⁷³ More recently an adaptation of Euripides' play, by the American director and writer Mary Fulham, *Hercules in High Suburbia*, presented it as a rock and roll musical performed in New York in 2005 (as a part of the New York International Fringe Festival), with allusion to contemporary politics and pop-culture.⁷⁴

Dance

The wildly popular Imperial entertainment of ancient pantomime, which involved a masked dancer conveying myths through gesture to the accompaniment of music from a water-organ and with the support of a narrator and choir, brought the madness of Heracles to stage in the medium of dance.⁷⁵ We know that "The madness of Hercules" was one of the myths in the repertoire of pantomime dancers in Augustan Rome (1st BC–1st AD century) through an anecdote, still known centuries later, about Pylades, one of the most celebrated pantomime dancers of the age. Macrobius, a grammarian and philosopher writing in the 5th century AD, tells the story of a performance by Pylades of "The madness of Hercules", during which, after the audience criticized his movements as unsuitable for the stage, he removed his mask and reminded them that he was playing the part of a madman.⁷⁶ Macrobius goes on to say that in the same performance Pylades shot real arrows into the audience and repeated the same behavior at a command performance at a banquet given for the Emperor Augustus (27 BC–14 AD). Pylades was not the only one to dance this role, as there is also evidence to suggest that later the Emperor Gaius

70 On Händel's oratorio, see Hall/Macintosh (2005) 197.

71 APGRD database ID 10965.

72 Reid (1993) I: 531.

73 APGRD database ID 8100.

74 APGRD database ID 97999. Riley (2008) 348–9.

75 On ancient pantomime in general, see Hall/Wyles (2008).

76 Macrobius *Saturnalia* 2.7.16–17.

(37–41 AD) performed it.⁷⁷ It is not possible to prove that Euripides' text was used as the basis for these pantomime performances, however the emphasis in pantomime on the embodiment of identity in props makes the idea very attractive.⁷⁸

Looking forward beyond antiquity, dance has been incorporated into performances of Euripides' play or adaptations relating to it. For example, Jacopo Melani's 1661 opera *Hercules in Thebes* performed for the marriage celebrations of Cosimo III de Medici and Marguerite Louise d'Orléans included notable elements of dance, at the end of acts, in its performance.⁷⁹ Adaptations of *Heracles* have been performed by modern ballet companies, too: *Herakles* performed by the Ballet de France in Paris in 1953 and *Herakles Ballet in Three Acts* performed in Russia in 1986.⁸⁰ The most recent dance performance of it was *Herakles via Phaedra: A Dance Theatre Epic* staged in May–June 2006 in New York, which set the myth in the 1920s jazz age and featured an eclectic range of choreography.⁸¹

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Euripides' *Heracles*, after its première ca. 415 BC, was destined to enjoy a stage life across the Greek-speaking world. This is certainly suggested by the 3rd century BC inscription from Tegea, in the Peloponnese, which records the victories of an actor in Euripides' *Heracles* at both the Delphic *Soteria* and the *Heraia* festivals.⁸² The play had evidently entered the itinerant actor's potential repertoire by this period. Even earlier than this, in the 4th century BC, the Asteas vase suggests that adaptations, influenced by the Euripidean version, were being performed on the South Italian stage.⁸³ The strong connection to the body of Heracleian myth maintained by communities in this region makes these performances even more likely to have taken place.⁸⁴ The continuing performance tradition of the role of tragic Heracles is also confirmed

77 Philo *Embassy to Gaius* 78–9 with Bellemore (1994).

78 Regarding this, see Wyles (2008) 174 n. 64.

79 Riley (2008) 115–6.

80 APGRD database ID 9781 and ID 9782 respectively.

81 Riley (2008) 349–50. About this musical, see also above, p. 485 n. 132.

82 Stephanis (1998) no. 3003, discussed and translated in Hall (2006) 55.

83 For discussion on this vase, see above, p. 570.

84 Griffiths (2006) 115.

by the preserved 1st-century BC epigram written about the tragic actor Apollophanes, which mentions a club amongst this actor's props.⁸⁵ Lucian, the Second Sophistic satirist, also gives us a glimpse of the continuing cultural familiarity with the stage role of Heracles in the 2nd century AD.⁸⁶ How closely the content of the above mentioned performances corresponded to Euripides' play is not clear although I would suggest they were capable of evoking it (even if only by contrast) and therefore form a part of the play's reception.⁸⁷

The original performance context of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* continues to be debated by scholars with some preferring the idea that these texts were written for recitation rather than staged performance.⁸⁸ However both full-scale stage productions or performed extracts in the public theatre remained possibilities in this period.⁸⁹ The possibility that Seneca may have composed his tragedies in such a way as to have rendered them suitable for pantomime performances has also recently been put forward.⁹⁰

The role of Heracles raging had its own particular reputation in the Renaissance becoming the figurehead of a bombastic acting tradition. This is parodied by Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* through the metatheatrical performance by the character Nick Bottom who offers an impromptu demonstration of acting as a tyrant in the "Ercles' vein" ("Heracles style," Act 1, scene 2, 21–32).⁹¹ Although there were not any major adaptations of either Euripides or Seneca in the Elizabethan period, it is possible to make a case for the influence of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* on other Elizabethan dramas.⁹²

During the 19th century, there are almost no productions of Heracles except for one notable exception: the revival in the original Greek performed by Reading School. Dr Richard Valpy, the headmaster, had introduced the tradition of its Greek play in 1806 and chose *Heracles* for performance in

85 Lucilius, *Palatine Anthology* 11.169. Heracles' madness was also one of the tragic roles apparently performed by the Emperor Nero; see Svetonius *Nero* 21.3. On the attraction of this role to rulers, see Wyles (2013) 196–7.

86 Lucian, *Nigrinus* 11.

87 Riley (2008) 50 suggests these performances were not of the Senecan-Euripidean hero.

88 See Zwierlein (1966) on recitation and Harrison (2000) on performance generally.

89 Fitch (2002) 21.

90 Zanobi (2008) 252.

91 Riley (2008) 101–6 who suggests that this tradition should not be connected directly with Euripides' Heracles or Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, though she admits that others connect it with Seneca's play (104).

92 Riley (2008) 117–49 with 106, n. 40 on traces of two *Hercules* plays. For the fate of Greek and Roman tragedy on the stage in general from 16th to 18th century, see Smith (1988) 199–264.

1818.⁹³ His choice may have been influenced by the inclusion of this play in Wakefield's selection of tragedies (1794); it is also possible that it was influenced by the performance of *Alcestis* a few years before (and the real lionskin from that performance which was presumably still in the costume cupboard...).⁹⁴ Mary Russell Mitford's review of the production for the newspaper *Reading Mercury*, together with her more candid account of it in personal correspondence, reveals that, despite the highly prized attempt at authenticity in this production some contemporary elements nevertheless crept in. The use of black outfits made of bombazine trimmed with crepe for Heracles' family when they are clothed ready for death owed more to 19th-century costuming conventions than to the 5th century BC.⁹⁵ Mitford is even more explicit about the anachronism of some of the gestures in the performance; she describes the end of the play thus: "The curtain then drops very slowly to soft music, leaving Messrs. Theseus and Hercules in the midst of a hug which assuredly no Greek poet, painter, or sculptor ever dreamed of. That hug was purely Readingtonian: conceived, born, and bred in the Forbury".⁹⁶ While the *Reading Heracles*, then, was very much the product of its own century, the power of Euripides' play and its effectiveness in performance was gaining exposure and recognition.⁹⁷ It was not only in England that this revelation was taking place: dovetailing this lone English production, at the other end of the 19th century, Antonio Varveris directed a production of Euripides' *Heracles* in Greece in 1879.⁹⁸

Since the turn of the 20th century there has been a proliferation (relative to the previous performance history) of stage productions of Euripides' *Heracles*. Wilamowitz's translation staged in Vienna (1902), Wedekind's *Herakles* (performed 1st September 1919 Prinzregenten Theater, Munich), MacLeish's *Herakles* (performed in Ann Arbor in 1965 and revived in 2005), and Armitage's *Mister Heracles* (staged 2001 in West Yorkshire playhouse, Leeds), have already been mentioned.⁹⁹ Though these are significant examples, they make up only a tenth of the list of *Heracles* productions on the APGRD database for the years

93 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 246–50.

94 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 253–4. On Wakefield's edition, see above, p. 566.

95 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 261–2 (with Letter to Sir William Elford, 1 Nov. 1818); Mitford (2013) 292–3 for the costuming of the family. For the newspaper review, see Mitford (1818).

96 Mitford (2013) 292–3.

97 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 254.

98 APGRD database ID 2336.

99 For discussion of the latter two productions, Riley (2008) 288–92, 303–7 (MacLeish) and 312–21 (Armitage).

1900-present.¹⁰⁰ These are too numerous to discuss each in full though I trace some broader observations. It is noticeable that the frequency of productions picks up after 1950 and there is an impressive global spread to the production list. Euripides' play, which began as an Athenian tragedy, has found its way across the world. It is perhaps the focus on the suffering and struggle of the individual which has made it so attractive in this period. Another characteristic is in the types of production which range from national, to student, experimental and amateur.

One of the most recent and provocative productions of *Heracles* to date has been the Aquila Theatre company's *Herakles*, directed by Desiree Sanchez, using an adaptation by Peter Meineck, and performed in New York and Athens 2012–2013. The production was minimalist.¹⁰¹ The most radical element to this production was the choice to replace the chorus of old men with projections of video interviews with contemporary war veterans (Peter Meineck selected questions, inspired from the choral odes).¹⁰² The videos were intended to draw attention to the relevance of the action for the audience and invited them to view Euripides' play through the lens of combat trauma. Though some felt that this video concept ultimately hijacked the whole show, at the same time the sense of "urgency" that was created in the production was noted.¹⁰³ Whatever the response to this production as a theatrical undertaking, the importance of the message which this production wished to convey was universally acknowledged across reviews.

The exploration of this ancient play's relevance to contemporary military issues and specifically the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has its roots in Simon Armitage's *Mister Heracles* and Daniel Algie's *Home Front*. In the latter, the action is set in 1972 and Heracles is presented as a soldier, assumed missing, returning from Vietnam. The play ends with a pessimistic view of the possibility of salvation.¹⁰⁴ The production of *Home Front*, staged by another New York theatre company, La MaMa, and directed by Randahl Hoey in 2006, resonated with contemporary preoccupations with the Iraq war

100 The current total is 42 (web-address for database listed above). Productions from 1800 onwards are also listed (up until 2007) in Riley's Appendix 1; Riley (2008) 358–65.

101 A choice which Nick Philippou also made for his 1998 production of *Heracles* at The Gate Theatre, London; Griffiths (2006) 127–8.

102 The other unusual and self-conscious element to the production was the use of masks; on which, see Mercouri (2013).

103 Zinoman (2013).

104 Riley (2008) 350–7.

and also seems sure to have influenced the Aquila Theatre company's project.¹⁰⁵ Through these productions *Heracles* has become the Euripidean PTSD-tragedy *par excellence*.¹⁰⁶ The difference with the latest such *Heracles* is that it was produced as the culmination of a three-year programme which explicitly hoped to facilitate war literacy and healing amongst veterans, military families and society in general. Perhaps, then, in a sense Aquila's production offers a form of the Euripidean human fellowship which has been otherwise absent in the modern reception of this play.¹⁰⁷

Screen

The story of Heracles' madness has not loomed large in film.¹⁰⁸ The release in July 2014 of MGM and Paramount pictures' *Hercules*, directed by Brett Ratner, however, attests a change in its fortunes on screen and suggests the assumed mass appeal of the Euripidean elements it incorporates. Though the film is explicitly based on Radical comics' graphic novel *Hercules: The Thracian Wars* (by Steve Moore, 2008) and the storyline takes a different direction from Euripides' play, the starting point of the narrative (after Heracles' Labors) and central theme of identity crisis, caused by the death of his family, which leads to his redemption (learning how to live as a hero), offer significant resonances with the original and again suggest an upturn away from Senecan pessimism.¹⁰⁹ Though derivative, the film offers further evidence, indicated also in the recent performance history, that Euripides' *Heracles* is a tragedy which still resonates in the 21st century.

105 Another production before this which used Heracles to address the issues of PTSD was Peter Sellars' Iraq-backdropped Händel's *Hercules* in Chicago in 2011. Although Händel's work was based on Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, this production can still be identified as an important influence on Aquila's response to Euripides' *Heracles*.

106 Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and *Aias* offer further examples of tragedies appropriated for this purpose, first by B. Doeries and then Meineck: see Lauriola (2014a, 2014b). For *Aias*, see also the more recent example of Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Ajax*, produced in Southwark playhouse, London in 2013 with discussion in Chatterjee (forthcoming).

107 Riley (2008) 357.

108 Riley (2008) 279; Disney's *Hercules* (1997) is a long stretch from Euripides, see Riley (2008) 342–3 and Griffiths (2006) 127.

109 Although the moral complexity of Euripides' play is drastically simplified in this film, comparison with *The Legend of Hercules* (January 2014), directed by Renny Harlin, highlights how much closer Ratner's *Hercules* is to *Heracles*. Steve Moore, author of *Hercules: The Thracian Wars* was notoriously thorough in his research for his graphic novels and it would be no surprise if he had read Euripides' *Heracles* or a derivative text influenced by it.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Heracles*

The reception of Euripides' *Heracles* is the specific focus of Riley (2008) and is analyzed in great depth in this study. In addition to Riley (2008), A. Blanshard, *Hercules. A Heroic Life* (London, 2005) offers a neat introduction to the ancient sources about Heracles and later responses to them. L. Foxhall./J. Salmon (eds.) *Thinking Men: Masculinity and its Self-Representation in the Classical Tradition* (London-New York, 1998) provide a gender context for thinking about the reception of Heracles.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

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The Children of Heracles (Heraclidae)

Rosie Wyles

*Euripides' The Children of Heracles is a patriotic play about the Athenian protection of vulnerable suppliants (the children of Heracles) threatened by the violent King of Mycenae, Eurystheus. The tragedy includes a chorus of Athenian war veterans (proud Marathon fighters), the selfless voluntary sacrifice of a maiden (a daughter of Heracles either without name or called Macaria)¹ and the miraculous battlefield rejuvenation of Heracles' elderly relative, Iolaus. It is likely to have been staged in the first years of the Peloponnesian war (ca. 431 BC) and can be argued to have been accepted in this original context as a celebration of Athenian ideology.² The play's inclusion of virgin sacrifice, which was probably a Euripidean innovation to the myth, has invited comparison with Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* both of which, however, enjoy fuller reception histories.³ Despite very little attention being given to *The Children of Heracles* during the Renaissance, the virgin sacrifice and battlefield rejuvenation of the elderly warrior appealed to cultural sensibilities in the 18th century and ensured its influence on three tragedies. To modern sensibilities, one might expect the combination of propaganda, patriotic sacrifice, and miraculous in Euripides' tragedy to be more troubling; the past two decades, however, have produced an unparalleled (in its reception history) growth of interest in the play as it has been appropriated to explore issues of immigration, war and the ethics of revenge.⁴*

* I would like to thank everyone at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (hereafter APGRD), Oxford, especially Edith Hall,—without their path-breaking work, I could not have written this chapter. I also extend my thanks to the Editors of this volume.

1 Euripides does not name her in the text, but in medieval manuscripts she is given the name Macaria: see Kovacs (2005) 54 n. 10. Similarly Eurystheus' herald is not named in the play but is given the name Copeus (following the *Iliad*) in manuscripts: see Kovacs (2005) 14 n. 3. On the naming of Macaria: see also Wilkins (1993) xix. For ease of reference I use the name Macaria.

2 Kovacs (2005) 9.

3 As for Euripides' innovation: see Wilkins (1993) xix–xx. On the reception of *Iphigenia at Aulis* and of *Hecuba*, see above, pp. 15–43 and 100–42.

4 As a result of the play's general neglect, there has been very little written on its reception; there is, for example, no entry in the otherwise invaluable Reid (1993) for the children of Heracles. I offer what I hope is a helpful starting point here, though the subject merits a

In Literature

Euripides' *The Children of Heracles* enjoys its first impact on literature through the selection of this myth, by 4th-century orators, as an exemplum for the excellence of Athenian greatness.⁵ This was a popular motif in Funeral Orations. For example, Lysias (5th–4th century BC), in his *Funeral Oration* (for those who died in the Corinthian War, ca. 392–1 BC), selects the Athenian championing of the lawful burial of the seven against Thebes and defense of the children of Heracles as glorious acts from the Athenian past demonstrating the city's virtue.⁶ Through these examples he evokes two Euripidean suppliant plays in succession: *Suppliant Women* and *The Children of Heracles*. Considering the continuing popularity of the latter in art, it seems fair to assume that Lysias might expect his audience to appreciate this allusion. Similarly when Demosthenes (4th century BC) offers a briefer mention of the same two examples in his *Funeral Oration* (dating to 338 BC), it is possible that the Euripidean treatments of these myths were brought to mind.⁷ The details of the children of Heracles myth given by both orators correspond with Euripides' version; except, unsurprisingly, they omit to mention the uncomfortable detail of the virgin sacrifice. In the year before Demosthenes' *Funeral Oration*, Isocrates (4th century BC) cites the example of the Athenian's response over the issue of the bodies of the seven against Thebes in his *Panathenaicus*.⁸ What is particularly significant about this reference is that Isocrates draws explicit attention to the tragic sources for the audience's knowledge of this myth. When later in the same speech he refers to the example of the children of Heracles, the details of Eurystheus' fate (battlefield capture, failed supplication and death) confirm that he has Euripides' play in mind.⁹ If these *exempla* were already being used by orators in the 5th century, then the rhetorical impact of these references would certainly have been enhanced by the memory of the performance, which *per se* constitutes an instance in the reception history of the play.¹⁰ Although Aeschylus (ca. 525–455 BC) also wrote a *Children of Heracles*,

monograph in its own right and I am sure that further research will unearth examples which can be added to complete our understanding of this play's reception history.

5 Regarding this, see, also, above p. 330.

6 *Funeral Oration* 2. 7–16.

7 *Funeral Oration* 60. 8.

8 12. 168–74.

9 12.194. Isocrates also uses this example in two earlier speeches (*Panegyricus* 4.54–60 and *To Philip* 5.34).

10 Kovacs (2005) 3.

we have too little of it to assess its potential impact in relation to these allusions and, in any case, the Euripidean version would have been the most recent in performance history.¹¹

Centuries later, *The Children of Heracles* was still exerting an influence on literature in Augustan Rome, as Ovid's playful engagement with it in his early 1st-century AD epic, *Metamorphoses*, demonstrates.¹² Ovid's mythological *tour de force* includes an extensive treatment of the Heracleian cycle of myth in Book 9 which tells the story of: Heracles' competition with Achelous and marriage to Deianira, the poisoning of Heracles with Nessus' "love-charm" after the sack of Oechalia, the agony of Heracles, his apotheosis, his birth and finally the rejuvenation of Iolaus (in the context of the protection of the children of Heracles). The most part of this engagement with Heracles (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9. 1–272) in fact retells events related by Sophocles in his *Women of Trachis*. There is a general tragic framing of this material through the use of signpost words which direct the reader's generic categorization of it. For example, the servant Lichas is described as unaware of the full situation (*ignarus*: 9.155) and Deianira is both tragically ignorant and most wretched (*nescia* and *miserima*: 9.155–6). At the same time specific details in the story suggest that Ovid invites his reader to think about Sophocles' play in particular as a deliberate intertext here, as has been persuasively argued in a recent study of tragedy in Ovid.¹³ This, I would suggest, prepares the reader for the briefer allusions to Euripides' *The Children of Heracles* in the remainder of the "Heracleian" sequence in this book. The first allusion to the story of the children of Heracles (9. 273–5) follows after the death of Heracles and enables Ovid to introduce the character Alcmene, Heracles' mother, who will tell the story of his birth to his former lover Iole (now pregnant wife of his son Hyllus).¹⁴ The synopsis

11 For other treatments of the myth, including Aeschylus', and Euripidean innovation, see Wilkins (1993) xi–xx.

12 For Heracles in general in Ovid's works see Galinsky (1972) 156–60; his reading of the treatment of Heracles in the *Metamorphoses* as predominantly mock epic does not preclude my reading of it as carrying tragic allusions. On Ovid's engagement with tragedy in general, see Curley (2013).

13 For examples, the violence in the description of the death of Lichas (*Metamorphoses* 9. 211–29) is as graphic as its Sophoclean counterpart (*Women of Trachis* 772–82). Anderson (1972) 426 recognizes that Ovid uses the same details as Sophocles (though suggests that he offers a different interpretation of the situation). For the engagement with the Sophoclean intertext particularly in Heracles' monologue on Mount Oeta (*Metamorphoses* 9. 176–204), see Curley (2013) 161–76.

14 The format of this story-telling through a dialogue between Alcmene and Iole is reminiscent of the Hellenistic poem *Megara* to which Ovid may also be alluding; on this, see also above, pp. 561–2.

of the situation, Eurystheus' continuing hatred being turned against Heracles' children, corresponds with the Euripidean tragedy even without further detail being offered.¹⁵ The allusion to the story and, I would suggest, to Euripides' treatment of it, also prepares for the later reference to Iolaus' rejuvenation.¹⁶ Again the extreme compression of the story and its very allusiveness suggests a familiarity with its further details and depends, I think, on the reader's knowledge of Euripides' play thus representing an important moment in its reception.¹⁷

It is likely that most Renaissance readers encountered Euripides' tragedy through Ovid's allusive engagement with it in his *Metamorphoses* rather than through accessing the Greek text itself.¹⁸ Euripides' text, however, would have been available in Greek from 1503.¹⁹ By 1541, it was also possible to access a Latin version of Euripides' text through the Basel edition of collected plays.²⁰ An individual Greek edition of *The Children of Heracles* had in the meantime also appeared in Paris in 1627. It was produced for use by Jesuits, as the IHS monogram on its title page indicates.²¹ There is no further clue for its selection for publication at this date since the edition has no preface. It is tempting, however, to suggest that the French Protestant Huguenot rebellion, which was supported by the English and culminated in the Siege of La Rochelle (ca. 1627–1628), may have prompted interest in this patriotic tragedy about countering foreign invading forces.²² At the very least, these historical circumstances must have influenced contemporary responses to this edition.

15 Anderson (1972) notes that the rest of the story would have been well known from "other sources"; he does not name them but I would suggest that Euripides was still the most prominent telling and the source most likely to come to mind in the context of the tragic framing of the earlier myth.

16 *Metamorphoses* 9.394–401.

17 It may even be that the reference to Iolaus' placement on the high threshold (9. 397) evokes a theatrical setting for the reader and further signals the tragic source for this episode.

18 "Ovid was the most imitated and influential classical author in the Renaissance": see Burrow (2002) 301.

19 Aldine edition: see Garland (2004) 106–7. For a table of Greek and Latin editions of Euripides in circulation before 1600, see Hirsch (1964) 141–2.

20 Hirsch (1964) 142.

21 The IHS symbol represents the first three letters of Jesus' Greek name. The publisher, Jean Libert, specialized in textbooks and classical texts for the universities and Jesuits: see Lerner (2000) 57 with 65, n. 13.

22 During the siege, the Huguenot rebels were starved into surrender by the besieging Royal forces.

It was in Paris again on a Monday morning in 1752 (most likely in February), that the playwright Jean-François Marmontel wrote to the acting troupe of the Comédie Française, to assure them of how much he valued their objective opinion of his work and to invite them to a reading of his tragedy *Les Héraclides* on 3rd March.²³ The first French translation of Euripides' play would not appear for another thirty-five years.²⁴ Even the Italian translation of the play did not appear before Marmontel's version, but was published in the same year as the play's production (1752).²⁵ Meanwhile the English and German complete translations of the plays of Euripides only became available later in the century.²⁶ This makes Marmontel's play a remarkable landmark in the reception history of *The Children of Heracles*. While the play itself is clearly not a straight translation of the Euripidean tragedy, it offers a significant point of access and offers an instance of performance impact for the ancient play.

Marmontel tells us in his memoirs that after writing his *Cleopatra*, he chose this play of Euripides because he wanted a subject that was more pathetic.²⁷ This purpose explains the changes he made to Euripides' tragedy. For example, he replaces Alcmene, mother of Heracles, with Deianira, widowed wife of Heracles, to allow for the *pathos* of the exchange between mother and daughter (Act 3, Sc. 2) before the daughter, named Olimpie in this version, is taken to be sacrificed.²⁸ Marmontel is likely to have been influenced by *Iphigenia at Aulis* in making this change, as he himself notes the similarities between these two Euripidean plays.²⁹ In rehearsal the interactions between mother and daughter were so emotive and powerful that, Marmontel claims, it rendered the actress playing Olimpie speechless in one rehearsal and melted

23 Renwick (1974) 1: 30–1. For the circumstances which had soured their relations with him (and therefore necessitated his conciliatory tone in this letter), see also his memoirs: Marmontel (1807) 98–9. For this 'memoirs' I reference the American edition (from which the translations are taken) and to which I had access at the time of writing.

24 Prévost (1787) 8: 301–63.

25 The first Italian translation of *The Children of Heracles* was published as the fifteenth volume in Carmeli's translation produced in Padua.

26 See details of translations in chapter on *Heracles*, above, p. 564 with Hoffmann (1833) 218–20.

27 Marmontel (1807) 98.

28 Deianira is mentioned in Pausanias' account of this myth (where he refers to Macaria as daughter of Deianira and Heracles): Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1. 32.6.

29 Marmontel (1807) 98.

the audience (of the rehearsal) to tears.³⁰ Unfortunately the same could not be said about the opening night of the play.³¹

The central concern for *pathos* in the project, which was by Marmontel's own assessment his most feebly written theatrical piece but his most pathetic, also accounts for his major change to the plot of Euripides' play.³² He revised the ending entirely, introducing a love story which saves Olimpie from death and ensures a happy ending with the promised marriage between Demophon's son, Sthenelus, and Olimpie. In this version, instead of ending with Alcmene's outrage and hopes for vengeance, Deianira gives her blessing to the marriage and the political union it implies.³³ This revision of the ending in the adaptation could be understood to correct what was seen at the time as a major fault in the Euripidean original, that is, the lack of appeal of the final Act to 18th-century society.³⁴ Marmontel's revision also addressed another specific criticism launched against the Euripidean ending: the apparent indifference of Alcmene to the fate of her granddaughter, Macaria.³⁵ Marmontel developed the event of Macaria's death by exploring the effects of the maiden's valiant decision. In his play we gain a more extensive insight into Olimpie herself, who wavers in her resolve, especially after falling in love with Sthenelus.³⁶ We also see the full impact of the event on Iolaus who tries to stop it (and fails) and on Deianira who, from Iolaus' account, believes Olimpie to have been sacrificed and laments bitterly. It is only at the end of the play that all this is resolved. The play was published in 1753 (the year after it was staged) and presumably both

30 Marmontel (1807) 99; Mlle Duménil played the mother and Mlle Clarion the daughter, both were leading actresses in the Comédie-Française specializing in tragic roles.

31 See below, pp. 595–6.

32 Marmontel (1807) 99.

33 How far Alcmene takes this vengeance in the original depends on the textual interpretation of lines 1050–3 and whether her final command is to leave Eurystheus' body for the dogs or to bury it. The issue remains unresolved, though most scholars think that her command to leave it to the dogs is untenable: see Wilkins (1993) 192–3. Irrespective of the interpretation of these specific lines, her desire for vengeance dominates this final scene.

34 This had already been noted by Pierre Brumoy in his analysis of the play: Brumoy (1730) 2: 648 (reprinted in Prévost [1787] 8: 196). In fact there are textual *lacunae* in the ending: see Wilkins (1993) 178 and 192–3. While these textual difficulties go some way to explaining the dissatisfaction with the final scene of the play, Brumoy's critique concerns the entire Act.

35 This was raised by Brumoy (1730) 2: 634–50, reprinted by Prévost who strongly seconds Brumoy's view and suggests that Macaria's death should have been developed: Prévost (1787) 8: 361–2.

36 In Act 4, scene 6 she has to pray to Hercules for the strength to go through with her death.

the initial impact of its disastrous performance as well as the account of it in Marmontel's memoirs drew further attention to it.³⁷

Across the channel, John Delap, Lincolnshire playwright and clergyman, wrote an English adaptation of *The Children of Heracles*, entitled *The Royal Suppliants* (1781).³⁸ The fascination of the play for Delap, unsurprisingly in the context of the theatrical vogue at that time, was the virgin sacrifice, which became the primary focus in his adaptation.³⁹ The names of characters were changed as were elements of the plot line but the opening makes the connection to the Euripidean original clear.⁴⁰ Delap's own protestation in the Advertisement of his published text must be viewed as rather disingenuous: "Indeed the whole conduct of this play is so entirely different from that of the Greek poet, that the author is hardly conscious to himself of having borrowed anything more from him than the general idea of the Suppliants taking refuge in the temple, and the maiden, Macaria's voluntary offer of her own life."⁴¹ He also omits to mention that his play had been influenced by the intermediary text of Marmontel's tragedy *Les Héraclides*.⁴² Although Delap's version is his own creation and his debt to Marmontel is not absolute, he follows the French playwright in replacing Alcmene with Deianira, which allowed for the added *pathos* and touching scenes between mother and daughter as Marmontel had recognized it would. This evidently accommodated the tastes of the day in England too. The play is praised in a contemporary account of it, specifically for the "two very affecting scenes between the mother and daughter, which are genuine pictures from nature."⁴³ The ending too deviates from Euripides and

37 On performance, see below, pp. 595–6.

38 Three editions of the play appeared in 1781—two in London and one in Dublin; I refer to the Dublin edition to which I had access when writing this.

39 He had also produced a *Hecuba* twenty years earlier (1761); Delap's "choice in subject matter illustrates the eighteenth century's prodigious attraction to virgins facing sacrifice," see Hall/Macintosh (2005) 64.

40 A good example of Euripidean debt is offered by the interaction between the Argive herald and Athenian King in Delap's play: p. 15. Delap's educational background suggests that he would have been able to access either the Greek or Latin editions in circulation: see Baylis (2004) and Clarke (1945) 10–49.

41 Delap (1781), front matter (unnumbered). On the naming of the maiden, see above, p. 584 n. 1.

42 Hall and Macintosh note that Delap and Mason (see below, pp. 591–2) "may have known" Marmontel's *Les Héraclides*: Hall/Macintosh (2005) 188 n. 7. Given the similarity to the changes that Delap makes, I think it certain that he was influenced by Marmontel's version.

43 Account recorded in Baker (1812) 3: 231; interestingly this notice also describes the play as "taken from" the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus as well as Euripides' *The Children of Heracles*.

owes more to Marmontel's vision of the tragedy, since in Delap's version it is again harmony and union which offer the thematic keynotes to the close of the play. Eurystheus is killed in battle by Hyllus, both offering a sense of exacted vengeance and also displacing the focus on him from the ending. Macaria is saved since it turns out the oracle was false and part of an elaborate plot. She is given by her brother Hyllus to be the wife of Acamas, brother of the King of Athens, with the promise that he can share Hyllus' throne.⁴⁴ This union creates an alliance free of the ambiguity and uncertainty that characterize the end of the 5th-century play. The survival of Macaria, who had in an earlier draft of the play been accidentally killed, was the result of the influence of the actor and playwright David Garrick, rather than Marmontel. We discover this from a letter in which Garrick offered apologetically honest criticisms of the draft and advised Delap against Macaria's accidental death.⁴⁵

It is striking that, although *The Children of Heracles* was not as culturally prominent as other Greek tragedies at this time, Euripides' play is referred to quite casually by Delap when commenting on his own adaptation (quoted above). This suggests that it was possible for him to assume familiarity with this play amongst his readership. Delap's version of the *The Children of Heracles* shaped responses to Euripides' play before it was even staged or published, since his idea for this adaptation is likely to have influenced *Caractacus*, written in 1759 by the poet and garden designer, William Mason: "It is surprising to find this obscure tragedy influencing the British stage in the eighteenth century, until it is remembered that Mason's curate, John Delap, was working on a version of the same play."⁴⁶ Mason's *Caractacus* told the story of British opposition to the Roman invasion and was appropriated for the cause of anti-colonialism.⁴⁷ The influence of *The Children of Heracles* is apparent in the battlefield rejuvenation of the elderly king Caractacus, though sadly for him, Mason did not adopt the happy ending that Iolaus enjoyed in Euripides' play. In fact Caractacus is assigned to the fate of Eurystheus who as a captive

44 Acamas is mentioned as a character in Euripides' play at line 119, but does not say anything.

45 In a letter dated 14th May 1774, Garrick describes the final four acts of the five-act play as "very languid and undramatic". He specifically dislikes: the false oracle, the false priest, the pitiful character of Demophon, the death of Macaria by accident and the unnatural combat of the brothers. He adds that the circumstances of the last act (which in his assessment is "much the worst") might be altered: Garrick (1831) 627.

46 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 188. *Caractacus* was first published in 1759 precisely the year after Delap's period of serving Mason as curate (1756–1758), at All Saints Church, Aston (Yorkshire): see Baylis (2004).

47 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 183–4.

is paraded in front of Alcmene at the end of the play. Similarly Caractacus is presented in chains on his way to being paraded as a captive in Rome. There is also a far closer relationship between the “magnificently unresolved tensions of its ending” and the political tensions and ambiguities infusing the end of the *The Children of Heracles* compared with the harmonious resolution of either Marmontel’s or Delap’s adaptation.⁴⁸ Ironically then the adaptation, which is only influenced in part by Euripides’ play and appropriates it for the telling of a different story, is in some respects closer to the original than the versions which are more explicitly based upon it. Tellingly, when Mason’s play was adapted for the opera *Avire et Evélina* (1788) by the librettist Guillard, it was changed so that it ended happily.⁴⁹

In the wake of these dramatic adaptations and the renewed interest in Euripides’ play that they are likely to have engendered, analysis of *The Children of Heracles* by the Genevan Pierre Prévost (1751–1839) which accompanied his French translation is likely to have been critical in shaping views of the original tragedy’s merits.⁵⁰ Apart from the criticism of the final act (and related regret that there is not a greater focus on the sacrifice of Macaria), noted above, the analysis is complimentary. He praises the subject, the development of the plot, the engaging twist in the plot created through the oracle, and even the rejuvenation of Iolaus which he says is given appropriate solemnity. Following on from this in the 19th century, the great English Classicist Peter Elmsley produced an edition of the play (1813) marking another important moment in its reception.⁵¹ Elmsley’s choice to edit this play is intriguing but he gives nothing away in the Latin preface to the edition where he teases the reader (especially one looking for clues in reception history), by saying that he either does not know the reasons which drove him to produce the work, or if he does know them it would not be of any interest to his reader for him to say (what they are)!⁵² In the same year that the second edition of this work came out (1828), an anonymous translation of *The Children of Heracles* and *Bacchae* was published.⁵³ Further translations of *The Children of Heracles* emerged over

48 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 189.

49 Rushton (2012) 221–4.

50 Prévost (1787) 8: 360–3.

51 Garland (2004) 129.

52 Elmsley (1813) 3.

53 Clarke (1945) 237.

the course of the century and into the next, which suggest a continuing cultural familiarity with the play.⁵⁴

In the 21st century, Kenneth McLeish's translation used for the production of *Children of Hercules* in the Scoop, London (2005), unlocked the power of this tragedy for a modern audience. This translation was described by one reviewer as: "audience-friendly" and attributed with "lending the tragedy a powerful contemporary resonance."⁵⁵ Other reviewers also identified this contemporary quality: "Willmott's direction and Kenneth McLeish's translation achieve the rare feat of being faithful to Euripides and relevant to London today."⁵⁶ This modern feel to the translation was produced by some domestication (for example, in the use of familiar but anachronistic terms, such as "His Majesty"), along with colloquial expressions ("To hell with you") and punchy syntax.⁵⁷ It seems that Euripides' neglected tragedy may have finally found a translator who could do justice to its inherent dramatic force.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

The earliest known artistic response to this play is a late 5th-century representation by the Athenian painter, Apollodorus.⁵⁸ This painting, as a *scholium* on Aristophanes' *Wealth* 385 informs us, depicted the sons of Heracles, Alcmene and the daughter of Heracles, supplicating the Athenians and in fear of Eurystheus.⁵⁹ At the end of the 5th century and on the other side of the Mediterranean (i.e., Italy), two Lucanian vase paintings, dated to ca. 400 BC, have been identified as "probably related to the opening scenes" of this play.⁶⁰ These are noteworthy since they suggest that the population of Heraclea, the Doric-Greek city in South Italy where these vases were produced, could set

54 Translations by: unknown *Bacchae* and *The Children of Hercules* with notes (1846); W. J. Hickie (London, 1886) and H. Sharpley (Cambridge, 1904).

55 Thaxter (2005).

56 Davies (2005). On the production, see below, p. 599.

57 For the translation, see Walton (1997) 63–101.

58 For images of the children of Heracles, in general, within antiquity, see Schmidt (1988).

59 Wilkins (1993) xxxi; though he is cautious about claiming a direct connection to the play, his point about the significant anonymity of the daughter of Heracles is persuasive. The *scholium* in fact corrects an apparently widespread attribution of the picture to Pamphilus; if it was by this later painter, then it pushes this instance of reception into the 4th century.

60 Taplin (2007) 126–30.

aside ideological prejudice in the enjoyment of this pro-Athenian play possibly in two separate dramatic performances (and certainly in these two pieces of art).⁶¹ Two further South Italian vases from later in the 4th century, Paestan bell-*krater*, dated ca. 330 BC (Staatl. Mus. inv. 719) and the Apulian volute *krater*, dated ca. 350 BC (Bari, Mus. Naz. 3648), have been tentatively connected with this play.⁶² These vases suggest the sustained cultural impact of Euripides' dramatic shaping of this myth. The theatre-related Paestan *calyx-krater* painted by Asteas (ca. 350 BC, now in Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional 11094) showing Heracles with a child which he is about to throw into a fire, though clearly related to a different play, includes the named characters of Iolaus and Alcmene who look on at the action.⁶³ This play, whatever it was, may have been influenced by Euripides' *The Children of Heracles* in its representation of these two central characters in its action. It also exerted an influence on the subsequent response to the Euripidean original. Though the vase is usually discussed in the context of Euripides' *Heracles* (because of the centrality of madness to both the vase and that play), it is also a significant piece of evidence in the story of *The Children of Heracles*' reception.

In art since the 4th century BC, while Heracles has enjoyed spectacular popularity as a subject, scenes from *The Children of Heracles* have not.⁶⁴ Similarly even though Ovid was widely read, his allusions to episodes from the play (the threat to the children of Heracles and Iolaus' rejuvenation) did not invite an artistic response; they were not selected for representation in art or even in illustrated editions of the *Metamorphoses*.⁶⁵ It may simply be the case that other episodes in Heracles' myth, in tragedy, and in the *Metamorphoses* offered greater artistic interest or were more readily iconic than the story of the children of Heracles.

Music

To my knowledge there are no operatic renditions that can be directly connected to this play. The same applies to *DANCE*.

61 Allan (2001) 53–4. The mythological ties of South Italian communities with Heracles is an important factor here and in the reception of *Heracles* too: see Griffiths (2006) 115.

62 Wilkins (1993) xxxii–xxxiii.

63 See further, above, p. 570.

64 See Boardman (1988) and (1990) for Heracles in ancient art; see Bull (2005) 86–140 on Renaissance art; and see Reid (1993) I: 515–61 for overview up to 1990s.

65 See Allen (2002) 341–51 on *Metamorphoses* in art. There is no representation of Iolaus, for example, in Bernard Salomon's illustrations in *Illustrations de La Métamorphose d'Ovide figurée* (1557, Lyon); instead the episodes featuring Heracles himself in book 9 are selected.

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

After its première in the first years of the Peloponnesian war, ca. 431 BC, this play may have enjoyed performances in the subsequent thirty years in South Italy.⁶⁶ This is all the more striking given that orators were, at the same time, championing it as an iconic myth illustrating the excellence of Athens. This offers a helpful challenge to the assumption of a uniform reception of any 5th-century play. Given the rapid spread of theatre across the Greek speaking world,⁶⁷ it is not surprising that these plays as performance pieces could mean something different to each individual Greek community they reached. Meanwhile in Athens they might retain a unique significance based on their original conceptualization, audience response, and subsequent place in that city's theatre history.

Marmontel's adaptation of Euripides' play was staged for the first time at the Théâtre Français, Paris, on the 24th May 1752. It was a disaster, despite rehearsals giving him hope that it would be well received. Indeed, the reason for its failure was (he claims) the result of an unfortunate incident of mistaken inebriation rather than the quality of the play itself. His account of the play's performance and reception is worth quoting at length:⁶⁸

I have mentioned elsewhere by what event all the affect of those pathetic scenes were destroyed, at the first representation. But what I have not chosen to explain in a preface, I may state clearly in these private memoirs. Mademoiselle Duménil loved wine. It was her custom to drink a tumbler between the acts, but so weakened with water as not to intoxicate her. Unfortunately, on that day her servant brought it her pure, without her knowledge. In the first Act she had just been sublime, and applauded with transport. Heated with exertion, she drank the wine, and it flew to her head. In this state of intoxication and insensibility she played the rest of her part, or rather stammered it out with so wild, so insane an air, that the pathetic became laughable. . . . As the public knew not what had passed behind the scenes, they did not fail to attribute to the part the extravagance of the actress; and, the report through Paris

66 Taplin (2007) 129–30; on vases suggesting this, see above, pp. 593–4.

67 Csapo (2010) 83–116. The conference held at King's College London, 4th–5th July 2014 (*Ancient Greek Theatre in the Black Sea*), has also brought attention to the importance of considering the spread of theatre to the Black sea region too; see forthcoming conference volume.

68 Marmontel (1807) 99–100.

was, that the tone of my piece was so extravagant, and so comical, that the spectators had burst with laughter.

He ends this account, by saying that the piece was staged again but despite the actresses' best efforts and an empathetic response from the audience, the prejudice against it persisted and the play closed after its sixth performance. Mason's *Caractacus*, on the other hand, was a greater success. Opening at Covent Garden on 6 December 1776, it continued to be performed for six months and was also revived the following season.⁶⁹ It was performed with an elaborate musical score by Thomas Arne.⁷⁰ Meanwhile Delap's play, *The Royal Suppliants* opened at Drury lane in 1781 and enjoyed nine performances before being performed further afield at the Theatre Royal, Bath.⁷¹ The success of the production, though modest, was all the more impressive in light of David Garrick's pessimistic view of the play's chances on stage in response to an earlier draft of it.

Since the 1940s, this play has been staged in every decade of the 20th century (with the exception of the 1950s), with two appearing on stage in the 1990s and four at the beginning of the 21st century.⁷² This production history includes the expected combination between national, small company, amateur and student theatre, resulting in large scale and more modest performances situated in Europe and America.⁷³ Particularly striking in this performance history are two productions mounted amidst political upheaval and oppression in Greece. The first of these marks the beginning of the 20th-century production history for this play and was staged at some time between 1943 and 1944 in Thessaloniki:

69 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 184.

70 Rushton (2012) 222.

71 Baker (1812) 3: 231; also, Hall/Macintosh (2005) 65.

72 I base the production history on the records in the APGRD database, accessible at: www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk. In what follows I reference production records using the ID number given in this database.

73 Amateur and student productions: in 1960 The Living Theatre company public reading of *Heracleidae* in New York (APGRD database ID 6341); in 1984 *Heracles' Children* by Teatro Technis company in London (APGRD database ID 3238); in 1993 production directed and translated by academic C. W. Marshall, at the Windsor Theatre, Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada (APGRD database ID 9675); 2003 *Children of Heracles* produced in the 49-seat 6th@Penn Theatre, San Diego (APGRD database ID 9675) and *Eraclide* was performed in a double-bill with *Agamemnon* at Zafferana, Sicily (APGRD database ID 7462).

Irakleides directed by Kyriazis Charatsari.⁷⁴ While it is important (in light of the play's recent reception) that this city has earned the title of 'capital of refugees', the major impact of immigration reached its height approximately twenty years before this production.⁷⁵ Far more immediate as a contemporary context with the potential to resonate with this Euripidean tragedy is the Nazi occupation of the city and persecution of its Jewish population.⁷⁶ The play's central concern with the oppression of the innocent and rightfulness of revenge seems likely to have motivated the performance of it at this date. During the later period of oppression in Greece under the dictatorship following the military Junta of 1967, *The Children of Heracles* was again put on stage (1970–1972): namely, *Irakleides* directed by Lambros Kostopoulos.⁷⁷ While the limitations on expression under the regime may have stifled creativity, this choice of play by the National Theatre of Greece had the potential of bringing a double political message to its audiences in Epidauros and Athens. The dictatorship may have approved of the tragedy's patriotism, but the oppressed could identify with the persecuted and fantasize, with Alcmene, about revenge. It is perhaps not surprising that *The Children of Heracles*, which was originally written in response to the political upheavals of war, should resonate again in times of violence, oppression and political instability in 20th-century Greece.

In the past three decades, the tragedy's potential to address the global issues of asylum seeking and immigration have surfaced through performance. This began with the high-profile professional production *Die Herakliden* ("The children of Heracles"), directed by the actor Hans-Dieter Jendreyko which toured in Switzerland and Germany in 1996.⁷⁸ Two productions since have also been particularly important in highlighting this aspect of the tragedy's relevance for 21st-century audiences: the American theatre director Peter Sellars' touring production of *Children of Herakles* (2002–2004) and the British director and playwright Phil Wilmott's 2005 production at the Scoop, London.⁷⁹

Peter Sellars' production, which toured from Germany to France, Italy, Netherlands and finally to the United states (Cambridge, Massachusetts),

74 APGRD database ID 2084.

75 Mazower (2004) 356–70.

76 Woodhouse (1977) 238–41 and Mazower (2004) 354. This production was a few years ahead of the politically significant appropriation of Classical drama which took place in detention centers (1946 onwards): see van Steen (2011).

77 APGRD database ID 1384. On the military dictatorship: see Woodhouse (1977) 295–312.

78 APGRD database ID 2229; see Flashar (2009) 350–1.

79 APGRD database ID 5766 and 9131 respectively.

explicitly viewed Euripides' play as a "twenty-four-hundred-year-old investigation of the plight of refugees."⁸⁰ The contemporary resonance of the play, and specifically its thematic engagement with what we now term issues of immigration and asylum seeking, was brought into sharp focus by this production. This was achieved both through elements of the staging itself but also through the deliberate and provocative framing of the performance with a discussion with (and about) refugees and a screening of a film on a related issue.⁸¹ Contemporary elements in the costuming of the production as well as the use of microphones gave the sense of relevance to the performance, which in other respects conformed to the original play.⁸² Importantly the audience became a part of the action being dramatized: when Athens agreed to protect the refugees, the children of Heracles shook hands with members of the audience and thanked them. Through this interaction the audience become implicated in the process of the virgin sacrifice. Sellars problematizes the issue of this sacrifice even further, firstly through its presentation on stage and secondly through making King Demophon into a female President in his production.⁸³ The request from the male Athenian King for sacrifice in the original play can be understood as an invitation from Euripides to reflect on patriarchal authority within his society. The substitution of a female President in Sellars' production problematizes this simple reading of the gender dynamics involved in the request. Finally Eurystheus' orange prison jumpsuit and chains at the end, as he appeared behind bullet-proof glass screen, encouraged the audience again to think about the contemporary relevance of this scene and for one reviewer at least was evocative of a "war atrocity trial."⁸⁴ Tellingly, in light of the 18th-century responses to this final scene and the treatment of Macaria's sacrifice in general, Alcmene's desire for revenge at the end was mediated through the implied psychological explanation that it was fuelled by her anger at the sacrifice.⁸⁵ Through its framing and contemporary elements of staging the production was successful in its agenda of using this play to raise awareness over the refugee problem in both Europe and America.

80 Quotation from the website of American Repertory Theater (the company which performed this production—A.R.T. hereafter): <http://americanrepertorytheater.org/events/show/children-herakles>.

81 The choice of pre-show speakers and post-show film varied: see A.R.T.'s website cited above.

82 Svensden (2003).

83 Graphically described by Stehle (2003).

84 Taylor (2003).

85 Stehle (2003).

Similarly the contemporary resonance to Euripides' play was made apparent in Phil Wilmott's 2005 production of *Children of Hercules* and was identified in its key themes of self-sacrifice, revenge and asylum seeking.⁸⁶ This production was performed by the company The Steam Industry in the open-air amphitheatre space of the Scoop in central London. The contemporary relevance of the themes of asylum seeking and immigration was reinforced by the costuming which put the authoritarian forces in British immigration officer uniforms. These contrasted with the timeless tattered gypsy costumes of the suppliants, the effect of which was reinforced through the accompanying gypsy music.⁸⁷ This staging would have been all the more impactful in 2005, since the Asylum and Immigration Act had been passed just the year before at the same time as immigration into the UK reached record numbers.⁸⁸ The self-sacrifice of Macaria was, as it had been in the past, compared to the sacrifice of Iphigenia which many of the audience would have seen portrayed by Hattie Morahan in Katie Mitchell's *Iphigenia at Aulis*, staged at London National Theatre, the year before this production.⁸⁹ The revenge at the ending, instead of becoming the disappointing anti-climax and Athenian indulgence that the 18th century judged it to be, in fact became one of the more arresting moments in the production. The question of the justice of Alcmene's wish to kill Eurystheus was thrown open to the audience who in the amphitheatre space, with its backdrop of City Hall, became democratically implicated in the action. This production again demonstrated the surprising dramatic power and relevance to a tragedy that has for centuries been neglected.

In trying to understand the revival of performance interest in this play, it may be relevant that two commentaries on it have appeared during the past two decades of this revival.⁹⁰ Though they may not have had the monumental impact that, for example, Wilamowitz's commentary exerted on the fortunes of the *Heracles* (1895),⁹¹ at the same time they will certainly have encouraged scholarly interest in this play and will have supported student productions of it. Equally it seems likely that the renewal of scholarly and theatrical attention given to Euripides' *Heracles* may have spurred interest in the *The Children of*

86 Woddis (2005).

87 Davies (2005) and Woddis (2005).

88 BBC news on immigration numbers: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4359756.stm>.

89 Thaxter (2005).

90 Wilkins (1993) and Allan (2001).

91 On Wilamowitz; see Riley (2008) 207; also above, pp. 567–8.

Heracles.⁹² A far more significant factor, however, in understanding the striking outbreak and clustering of productions of this play between 2002–2005 (more productions in those four years than in any other decade in its reception history) is hinted at both by the central focus on immigration in Sellars' and Wilmott's production as well as the arresting inclusion of the audience in the 2005 production's end. The timing of this clutch of productions in the years following the shocking events of 9/11 (2001) is, I would suggest, no coincidence. As a result of those events, the question of the ethics of revenge in a military context has become culturally prominent on a global scale and politically critical. The final exchange of Euripides' play is brought into sharp focus through our contemporary context and crisis, offering strength to the problematic ending which has been criticized in previous centuries. In fact the power of this tragedy would be considerably diminished, in our century, if the ending were replaced with its harmonious 18th-century substitutes. This same cultural preoccupation with war and revenge is one of the reasons for *Hecuba*'s revived popularity on stage in recent years.⁹³ So that the pairing of *Hecuba* and *The Children of Heracles*, which in previous centuries was prompted by a shared treatment of virgin sacrifice, has been offered a new rationale through this new trend and cultural context: these are plays about war and revenge.⁹⁴

Screen

Despite its obvious roots in 5th-century Athens, in the 21st century Euripides' *The Children of Heracles* has been given new life as a powerful drama through which—as I have discussed above—contemporary issues of immigration, the politics and sacrifices of war, and the ethics of revenge can be explored. While a television or film adaptation of this play has never, to the best of my knowledge, been made, it is possible that this recent recognition of its contemporary relevance will inspire one in the coming years.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *The Children of Heracles*

William Allan explores the play's reception within antiquity, as a test case, in "Euripides in Megale Hellas: Some Aspects of the Early Reception of Tragedy" *Greece and Rome* (2001) 48, 67–86. The only major work of scholarship on the

92 See *Heracles* above, pp. 567–8.

93 Foley (2014).

94 Prévost (1787) 8: 361–2.

modern reception of this play, to the best of my knowledge, is the discussion of the adaptations by John Delap and William Mason in Hall/Macintosh (2005).

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PART 6

Beyond Tragedy: A Satyr Drama



Cyclops

Simone Beta

Since the plot of Euripides' Cyclops comes from the ninth book of Homer's Odyssey, it is not very easy to separate the 'Afterlife' of the Homeric version from the reception of the Euripidean play. However, if we concentrate on the details that Euripides added to the epic version, which was still very popular in 5th-century BC Athens, it is possible to spot some traces of his satyr play both in the ancient and modern reception of the story.

The basic plot, common to Homer and Euripides, is well known: during his troublesome homecoming, Odysseus finds a cavern that appears to be inhabited by an enormous being. It is Polyphemus, Poseidon's son, a Cyclops, a giant with a big eye in the middle of his forehead. The cruel and savage Cyclops would eat all the Greeks one by one, had not Odysseus tricked him by inducing the monster to drink some powerful wine. When Polyphemus gets drunk and falls asleep, Odysseus blinds him with an olive tree and escapes with his companions.

In Literature

To the traditional version of the story, whose popularity had been increased by the growing importance of the Homeric poems in the educational program of the Greeks, Euripides added some peculiar features. The most significant one is, of course, the chorus of the satyrs, a fundamental element of the dramatic genre; its leader, the coryphaeus, is the old Silenus, Dionysus' tutor. Euripides imagines that they have landed at the Cyclops' island some time before Odysseus and have been forced by the monster to become his slaves. Silenus plays a comic role throughout the play, while the other satyrs help the Greek hero in blinding Polyphemus. Another significant innovation introduced by Euripides concerns the personality of the Cyclops. He is not just a brute as in Homer, but he has a subtle capacity of reasoning, that makes him similar to some of the sophists, the intellectuals that in 5th-century BC Athens were criticizing the traditional culture through their revolutionary teaching. Polyphemus' peculiar nature differs from Homer's in another way as well: after he has drunk the wine poured to him by the clever Odysseus, the Cyclops starts to sing terrible songs together with the hero's friends. In the specimen of

his symposiac song offered by Euripides (ll. 503–10), he surveys all the topical motives of the convivial songs, such as the joy offered by the banquet and the merriness caused by the wine (“I am loaded up with wine and my heart skips with the cheer of the feast,” ll. 503–4), together with the impelling urge to go out and dance like an unbridled reveler.

The singing Cyclops invented by Euripides probably inspired the equally singing Cyclopes we find in other Greek authors. In two of Theocritus’ bucolic poems, *The Pastoral Poets* (Idyll 6) and *The Cyclops* (Idyll 11), there is more than a simple mention of the musical performances of Polyphemus. In Idyll 6, the singing cowherd Dametas puts himself in the Cyclops’ shoes in order to tell his rival Daphnis how he reacts to the unpleasant behavior of the beautiful sea-nymph Galatea, who seems to despise him. In Idyll 11, it is Polyphemus himself who sings a tender love song to the white Galatea, “whiter than curd, softer than a lamb, more skittish than a calf, sleeker than unripe grape” (ll. 19–21), holding out both his wealth and devotion in order to attract her. However, we do not know for sure if the model of this singing Cyclops is the ‘inept singer’ who, in Euripides’ satyr play, comes forth from his rocky cave uttering graceless sounds (l. 490). It is more likely that Theocritus took his direct inspiration from the dithyramb composed by Philoxenus of Cythera at the beginning of the 4th century BC: Philoxenus’ piece, in fact, is the pastoral burlesque where we find for the first time the Cyclops in love with the nymph Galatea. But the Euripidean picture is surely behind the background we see in the first of Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Sea-gods*: after Galatea has listed the bent for music among the good qualities of his wooer Polyphemus, Doris compares the more recent singing performance of the Cyclops to the bray of a donkey. The lack of synchrony between Polyphemus’ voice and the noise produced by his rustic lyre, made of a deer’s skull, clearly reminds us of the unpleasant melodies uttered by the drunk Cyclops of Euripides’ satyr play.

During the Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Euripides’ satyr play did not receive much attention. We have only one papyrus with the text of *Cyclops*, written in the 4th century AD; it contains the fragments of some thirty lines.¹ The play reappeared in 1503, when Aldo Manuzio published in Venice the *editio princeps* (“the main, first edition”) of Euripides’ theatre production,

1 P. Oxy. 4545 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001). As far as the manuscript tradition is concerned, it is well known that, if the paleographer and scholar Demetrius Triclinius had not found in the 14th century in Thessaloniki a manuscript with a portion of an alphabetical edition of Euripides’ *opera omnia*, the *Cyclops* would have been lost forever. This famous manuscript is the Laurentianus Graecus 32.2, now in Florence, in the Biblioteca Laurenziana designed by Michelangelo.

edited by Johannes Gregoropulos with the help of a copy of the manuscript corrected and annotated by the Byzantine teacher Demetrius Triclinius.² But it took a long time before the first Latin translations of *Cyclops* began to be published. In September 1507 the well-known humanist and theologian Erasmus asked Manuzio if he was interested in publishing the translations of Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* he had just finished,³ but the first complete Latin translation of all Euripides' plays (*Cyclops* included) did not appear until 1558 in Basel. In 1597 the printer Commelin published in Heidelberg the Greek text of the *opera omnia* ("all the works") of Euripides (included the fragments of a lost tragedy, the *Danae*) according to the edition of Willem Canter (already edited in 1571 in Antwerp by Plantin). Canter's text of *Cyclops* was translated into Latin by the French scholar Florent Chrestien. Chrestien (who is famous for his translation of Aristophanes) did not publish his rendering, but his son Claude donated it to the well-known French classical philologist Isaac Casaubon. Casaubon was so impressed by the charm of this translation that he wanted it to be published as an appendix to his treaty on the satiric poetry of the Greeks and the Romans (*De Satyrica Graecorum et Romanorum Satira*, 1605). Since this book was the first critical essay that dealt with the satyr play, its diffusion made the subject more popular—and, at the same time, it made the text of Euripides' play known to a broader number of scholars and writers. Chrestien's translation was accompanied by a set of interesting notes that constituted the only available commentary on the text prior to the appearance of the commented edition of the play published by Johann Hoepfner in 1789. Among its readers, there was the English playwright Ben Jonson.⁴

When Casaubon's essay was translated into other modern languages, the editors translated the text of the play as well.

The first complete translations of Euripides' whole theatrical production in a language other than Latin appeared in the mid-18th century. All translations were made by scholars, and were therefore devoid of any poetical beauty.⁵

2 See above, n. 1.

3 Manuzio was interested indeed, and the book with Erasmus' Latin translation was published before the end of that year.

4 Sutton (1998).

5 To mention a few: the French humanist and scholar Pierre Brumoy's *Théâtre des Grecs* ("Greek Theatre," 2nd edition), with the complete French translations of all the Greek tragedies and comedies, was published in 1763. Between 1743 and 1753 Michelangelo Carmeli published in Padua, a volume after another, the first complete Italian translation of the nineteen plays of Euripides; *Cyclops* appeared in 1751, preceded by another translation, due to Girolamo Francesco Zanetti, published in 1749. Mention should be reserved for the first complete translations into English. Their authors were Robert Potter, who published all the

But in the following century some renowned poets started to be attracted to the art of the Greek playwrights. As for *Cyclops*, in 1819 it was translated by the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. The work was not published during his lifetime, but was edited two years after his death, in 1824, by his wife Mary among the posthumous poems. In the same years the renowned German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe seemed to be very interested in Euripides' play as well. From his diaries (*Tagebücher*) we learn that in the first months of 1823 he was reading the satyr play. In a letter to the musician Carl Friedrich Zelter written in 1824, he told his friend that among his papers there was a small essay on that subject that needed to be completed. The essay *Zum Kyklops des Euripides* ("On Euripides' *Cyclops*", that is actually a collection of three meditations on Greek theatre) was finished in 1826 and can be read among Goethe's posthumous works. But we may think that Goethe had surely read Euripides' play many years before: the short verse play *Satyros*, one of his first theatrical attempts, composed in the summer of 1773, has been defined "a farce that bears an uncanny resemblance to satyr-play."⁶

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

The motif of the satyrs' assistance to Odysseus in defeating the one-eyed monster seems to have enjoyed some popularity in classical art. Indeed, the presence of a couple of dancing satyrs in a *calyx-krater* painted in southern Italy, which shows Odysseus about to blind the drunken Cyclops, suggests that the subject may have been inspired by the Euripidean satyr play. As it has been observed, "the artist's emphasis upon the theatrical aspect is a significant expression of that connection between myth and drama which is to play such an important part in later South Italian vase-painting."⁷ The connection between the plot of this satyr play and the scene painted on this vase seems quite probable, since the much discussed chronology of the Euripidean play allows a date coherent with the *floruit* of the Cyclops Painter (a close collaborator of the Pisticci Painter, whose career seems to have begun around 430 BC). On the contrary, it seems more difficult to postulate a similar connection between the Cyclops and a small painting that the Roman author and

plays in two volumes in 1781 (London), and Michael Wodhull, whose complete translation in four volumes was published in 1782 (London).

6 Denton (1996) 434.

7 Trendall (1989) 19–20.

naturalist Pliny the Elder (1st century AD) attributes to Timanthes of Cythnus, a celebrated artist active in the second half of the 5th century BC (Plinius, *Naturalis Historia*, 35. 74). In this work, Timanthes, who was famous for the originality of his treatment of mythological subjects, painted the sleeping Cyclops surrounded by a group of small satyrs who, in order to emphasize the monster's gigantic dimensions, were portrayed in the action of measuring the size of his thumb with a wand.

Old and modern painters seem, however, to have preferred to draw their subject out of the Theocritean version rather than of Euripides' and even Homer's. A quick look at the material listed in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* shows how Polyphemus' passion for Galatea was a popular topic in Roman art.⁸ When the 16th and 17th century painters decided to add mythological themes to the more common religious ones, the Cyclops' monstrosity became a very attracting subject. Examples of this include the painting by the Flemish artist Jacob Jordaens (*Odysseus in the Cave of Polyphemus*, 1635), preserved in the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts at Moscow, where Odysseus is portrayed while he is on the verge of hiding himself under the ram; and the fresco painted by the Italian baroque painter Annibale Carracci in the Gallery of Palazzo Farnese, where Polyphemus is about to throw a rock behind the two fugitive lovers. In both paintings, however, there is no reminiscence of the satiric version created by Euripides.⁹

Music

When the librettists of the Italian 'melodramma' started to look for interesting characters for their plots in the rich sources of classical mythology, Odysseus was one of the heroes they loved most, as Claudio Monteverdi's *Il ritorno di Ulisse in patria* ("Ulysses' homecoming") shows.¹⁰ But when they wanted to create stories based on one of the most famous episodes of the *Odyssey*, the encounter with the Cyclops, they too preferred to set to music Theocritus' version.

The many Polyphemuses that began to populate the lyrical stages of Europe since Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Acis et Galatée* ("Acis and Galatea"), the *pastorale-héroïque* performed in 1686, have nothing to do with the scary creature invented by Homer's imagination and endowed with satyrs by Euripides. In the history of the so-called *opera seria* ("tragic opera", the opposite of *opera*

8 Montón Subías (1990).

9 Reid (1993) II: 732–4.

10 This *tragedia con lieto fine* ("tragedy with a happy end") was performed for the first time in Venice in 1640.

buffa, “comic opera”) Polyphemus is in fact always in love with the pretty nymph Galatea and rival to the river-god Acis. This *ménage à trois* traces back not only to Theocritus but also to the story made popular by the Roman poet Ovid (1st century BC–1st century AD) in his *Metamorphoses* (Book 13). It became the most successful theme as it gave rise to a long series of musical works, starting from *Il Ciclope, tragedia satirica in musica* (“satiric tragedy in music”) written by Girolamo Frigimelica Roberti and performed in 1695 at the Obizzi theatre of Ferrara (we ignore the name of the composer). In 1702 Berlin saw the first performance of Giovanni Bononcini’s *Polifemo* (“Polyphemus”), while Georg Friedrich Händel’s *Acis and Galatea* premiered in London first in 1718, as a one-act-masque; later, in 1739 as a two-act work. With this work Händel attempted to counterbalance the success of *Polifemo*, the *opera seria* set to music by his rival Italian Nicola Porpora on a libretto by Paolo Rolli, performed for the first time in the same town in 1735.

As for the following centuries and, more specifically, the 20th and 21 centuries, it is altogether strange that a theatrical genre such as satyr play, a genre where music played a very significant role, does not seem to have attracted many famous composers. Apart from Giuseppe Mulè, a fairly renowned composer (at least at his times), who wrote the music for the 1927 Sicilian performance of *Cyclops* at Syracuse based on Ettore Romagnoli’s translation,¹¹ the names of the other musicians are quite few. When Willem Pijper, the most important composer in the Netherlands in the first half of the 20th century, met the playwright Balthazar Verhagen in 1923, they worked together at three new co-productions of Greek dramas. They began in 1924 with *De Bacchanten* (“The Bacchant Women”), translated by Verhagen into Dutch; in 1925 they produced *De Cycloop*, again in Verhagen’s rendering; in 1926 it was the turn of Sophocles’ *Antigone*.¹² Other than that, we know very little, if anything, about the musical reception of Euripides’ *Cyclops*. But a mention should be reserved for two particular specimens belonging to a specific genre, which is more fit to a show where song and dance were as much important as words. Such a genre is the musical comedy (or, more simply, musical). The first example is *Cyclops (Nobody’s musical)*, performed in February 1983 at Stanford University; the second is *Cyclops (A Rock Opera)*, first performed at the Son of Semele theatre in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles in 2011, and then brought to the New York Musical Festival in the same year. The libretto and lyrics of the first one were written by Rush Rehm, who at the time was a young PhD student at Stanford and is now professor of Classical and Theater & Performing Studies at

11 See below, pp. 614–5.

12 Sadie (2001) XIX: 740–3.

that same university. The music was composed by Francis James Brown, who was already an established composer, older than his student partner. The music of *Cyclops (A Rock Opera)* was composed by Jayson Landon Marcus, who also played the part of the Cyclops, with the help of Benjamin Sherman. In the writing of the libretto, Louis Butelli (Silenus) and Chas LiBretto (Odysseus) were inspired by Shelley's translation, which they adapted for the stage. One of the reviewers of the many rehearsals of this second musical wrote that the audience should not be surprised if they left the theatre "thinking Euripides must have had a hand in *The Rocky Picture Show*."¹³ Such a statement is not only a praise for the skills of the young authors, but also the recognition that the long time distance that divides the Greek playwrights from us can be shortened through the use of both cleverness and respect.

Dance

To the best of my knowledge, there are not specific choreographies inspired by Euripides' *Cyclops*.

On Stage and On Screen

Stage

Since the end of the 19th century Euripides' satyr play began to appeal by theatre directors. The above-mentioned Shelley's translation was published again in 1882, in a small booklet which specifies, in its title, that the play was performed "in the original Greek" at the Magdalene College School on the 28th April 1882. In that very year Euripides' *Cyclops* was also performed in Vienna at the Burgtheater: on the 10th February the director of the most prestigious Austrian theatre, the German writer Adolf Wilbrandt, produced the play in the German translation he had made and published in 1866, together with three tragedies of Sophocles (*Oedipus the King*, *Antigone*, and *Electra*).¹⁴ In the title of his book Wilbrandt had added the note "mit Rücksicht auf der Bühne", that is, "with regard to the stage". In the 1882 performance *Cyclops* accomplished the same task that a satyr play used to accomplish in ancient Athens, i.e., the task to relieve the heart of the spectators, overwhelmed by the ruinous outcome of a tragic story. Before the amusing confrontation between a clever Polyphemus and a cleverer Odysseus, the Viennese audience had,

¹³ McNulty (2011).

¹⁴ Wilbrandt (1866).

in fact, watched Sophocles' *Electra*, performed for the first time in a German speaking theatre.¹⁵

There are very few recordings of other performances of this neglected play before 1882. The Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama, a database set by the Oxford University, lists only two Greek productions. The first one, an amateur performance, was staged twice at the ancient Odeion of Herodes Atticus (Athens) in 1868. In both occasions, it was performed after a tragedy.¹⁶ The second production was staged by the Thiasos Euripidis, a theatrical company led by Antonis Varveris, at the Theatro Chauteion (Piraeus), between the years 1876 and 1877. Once again, it was performed after a tragedy, in order to amuse the audience and relieve their feelings.¹⁷ Varveris' company put the Euripidean play on stage in other Greek venues: *Cyclops* was performed in 1889 at the Theatro Paradeisos and in 1893 at the Theatro Olympia, both times in Athens.¹⁸ Other significant performances were produced in the following years at an increasing rate, even in very remote places, such as the Sydney Grammar School, an Australian institution where a partial *mise en scène* of the play was performed on the first day of 1886.

A selection of the most significant performances of the only extant Greek satyr play in the 20th and 21st century can only begin with Syracuse and Epidaurus, the towns that 'host' the two most famous extant theatres still used for the modern performances of the Greek classical theatrical production. The performances at the beautiful theatre of the Sicilian town of Syracuse organized by the INDA (*Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico*, "the National Institute of the Ancient Drama") started in 1914 with Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, translated by the classicist Ettore Romagnoli. Romagnoli, who had a leading role in the birth of the Syracuse festival, translated also the *Cyclops*, which was performed in 1927. This was, indeed, the first and last appearance so far of the Euripidean satyr play on the Syracusan stage. In the following years the INDA organized other performances of the play that were staged in other beautiful Sicilian venues.¹⁹ The most recent performance of *Cyclops* under the INDA flags was directed by the actor and theatre director Vincenzo Pirrotta, who

15 Flashar (1991) 95–103.

16 Sideris (1976) 49–50.

17 Sideris (1976) 66.

18 Sideris (1976) 68 and 108.

19 For instance, the *Cyclops* translated by Eugenio Della Valle was performed in 1937 in the Greek-Roman theatre of Taormina and in the archaeological park of Agrigento. The same version was performed in 1949 not only in Taormina, but also in the Roman theatre of Ostia Antica, near Rome: see Zoboli (2000a).

played the role of Ulysses. This play, staged at the Greek theatre of Palazzolo Acreide (near Syracuse) in May 2005, was very peculiar because of one particular feature: the text was neither in Greek nor in Italian, but the actors spoke the vernacular of Sicily. For his *Cyclops* (namely, for his '*U Ciclopu*'), Pirrotta used the Sicilian translation made by the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello.

Pirandello (who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1934) began his successful career as a playwright in 1910 with the composition of a few texts written in the Sicilian dialect, because he was persuaded that only dialect was able to stick to reality. The translation of the Euripidean play dates 1918, when Pirandello had already started his theatrical production in Italian.

The first performance of '*U Ciclopu* (the Sicilian translation of "The Cyclops")' was held in Rome, at the Teatro Argentina on January 26th 1919. In the short note written for the publication of part of the translation in the newspaper *Il messaggero della domenica* ("The Sunday Herald"), a few weeks before the debut of the play, Pirandello stated that the only possible modern language for Euripides' play was the vernacular of Sicily, not only because the action takes place in that island, but also because the Sicilian people are not different from the characters of the play. According to Pirandello, if one strips Polyphemos of his mythical clothes, it is possible to find him among the miners who sink in the sulfur mines and among the shepherds who pasture their flock on the Sicilian mountains. The lamp that the miners wear on the helmet in order to illuminate the dark sulfur caves is the modern equivalent of the only eye of the Cyclops.²⁰ This peculiar rendering, aimed at making ancient Greek plays easy to access and to relate to, is not the only translation by a famous Italian writer. During World War II the poet Camillo Sbarbaro, who had been forced to leave high school teaching because of his refusal to join the Fascist party, spent his time translating novels from modern French and plays from ancient Greek, including Euripides' *Cyclops*. His was a prose translation, based on the 1911 Ettore Romagnoli's translation, and it was published in 1945. Sbarbaro's prose rendering was then deeply modified in the years to come, when the Italian poet decided to set it into verses. The result, published in 1960, earned the poet a lot of praises, even by some classical scholars, who liked his unconventional and poetic rendering of Euripides' play.²¹

The choice of the best possible language is a pivotal topic for any translation that is not supposed to be read by a lonely reader but to be heard by a large audience. This is even more significant for the language that was the direct descendant of the one used by the characters of *Cyclops*—namely,

20 Pirandello (1973) 1214.

21 Zoboli (2000b) and (2005).

modern Greek. In order to be understood by spectators who were not able to understand ancient Greek anymore, Euripides had to be translated into a 'younger' language. The first performance of a Greek play at the beautiful theatre of Epidauros was in fact in modern Greek. The Greek National Theatre 1938 production of Sophocles' *Electra*, directed by a renowned Greek actor and director, Dimitris Rontiris, was the first to be staged in that fascinating venue since ancient times. The production was mounted by the Greek Touring Club, which aimed to establish an annual Epidauros season. But the outbreak of the Second World War first and the ensuing Greek Civil War later forced this ambitious plan to be shelved. The following season started in the '50s. *Cyclops* was performed for the first time in the summer of 1959; a second production of the play was staged in the summer of 1974.

Among other productions of Euripides' *Cyclops* on the modern stage, a mention should be reserved for the experimental work of the German theatre director and professor of Theater History Karl Gotthilf Kachler.²² When he was director of the Studententheater of Basel, in Switzerland, between 1936 and 1946, among many plays of Aristophanes, he staged also the Euripidean satyr play, namely between 1943 and 1944. The most peculiar characteristic of his performances is the use of the masks.²³ The sensations of ancientness aroused by the show were enhanced by the fact that the plays were not translated but performed in the original language. Another noteworthy production is *Zyklops* ("Cyclops") by the Italian director Roberto Ciulli, first staged at the Schauspiel of Cologne, in 1978. The play was then staged again, in a different form, in Düsseldorf in 1979; and after a further revision, at the end of 1981, in Mülheim, at the Theater an der Ruhr, a venue founded by Ciulli himself together with the 'dramaturg' Helmut Schäfer.²⁴ Euripides' *Cyclops* was the second play performed in that theatre. In order to strengthen the participation of the audience in the event Ciulli had introduced a very special prologue in the foyer, in which the spectators were asked to throw a javelin at the Cyclops' only eye—and the prize for the winners was a T-shirt with the legend 'Zyklop'. Odysseus' companions were not professional actors: their part was played by a few spectators, who also had the honor of helping the hero and the satyrs in blinding Polyphemus. The four satyrs constantly interacted with the audience, while

22 On the peculiarity of Kachler's theatre, see Flashar (1991) 168. Kachler was one of the pupils of the famous Austrian director Max Reinhardt.

23 On the masks, made by the Swiss artist Max Breitschmid, see Kachler/Aebi/Brunner (2003).

24 Flashar (1991) 254–8.

the Cyclops was played by a woman, so as to denounce the lack of credibility of the figure.²⁵

The urge to innovation, which Ciulli's work suggests, has indeed been a characteristic that has marked most of the productions of the last two centuries. For instance, in the Czech production directed by K. Kříž in 1994 at the Labyrinth Theater of Prague, *Cyclops* was performed at the end of an original trilogy called *Conquerors of Troy* and composed by three Euripidean tragedies (*Trojan women*, *Hecuba*, and *Andromache*) all connected with the tragic consequences of war.²⁶

Screen

Euripides's version of the Cyclops' story is missing from movie scripts. When a director wanted to film the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops, the screenplay was always based on the Homeric version. It happened, for instance, in the best of all the film versions of the *Odyssey*, Mario Camerini's *Ulysses*, shot in 1955, with Kirk Douglas in the leading part. As far as I know, there is no filmic version of the Euripidean play.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Cyclops*

To the best of my knowledge there is not a specific, comprehensive scholarly work devoted to the reception of this play. Some information can be found in George. W. M. Harrison's entry "Cyclops," in Roisman, H. (ed.) (2014) *Encyclopedia of Greek Tragedy*. 1: 372–5. Malden (MA) – Oxford (UK): Wiley-Blackwell.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

Literature

Thomas, R. S. (1970) *Polyphemus in Art and Literature* Diss. Medford (Mass.).

²⁵ Flashar (1991) 158.

²⁶ Stehlíková (2001) mentions two other Czech productions of Euripides' satyr play, both staged in Prague, by J. Frejka in 1929 and by P. Pásek in 1943.

Fine Arts

- Carpenter, T. H. (2005) "Images of Satyr Plays in South Italy," in Harrison, G. W. M. (ed.) *Satyr Drama: Tragedy at Play*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 219–36.
- Taplin, O. (2007) *Pots and Plays: Interactions between Tragedy and Greek Vase-painting of the Fourth Century BC*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Publications, 33–5.

Stage

- Treu, M. (2006) "Satira futurista e Satiri Siciliani," *Quaderni di Storia* 63: 345–370.
- (2010) "La festosa invasione dei Satiri in Sicilia," *Dionysus Ex Machina* 1: 1–6.
- Walton, J. M. (1987) *Living Greek Theatre: A Handbook of Classical Performance and Modern Production*. New York: Greenwood Press.

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- Stehlíková, E. (2001) "Production of Greek and Roman Drama on the Czech Stage," *Eirene* 37: 71–160.
- Sutton, D. F. (1998) "Florent Chrestien's Latin Translation of Euripides' *Cyclops* (1605)," *The Philological Museum*.
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- Zoboli, P. (2000a) "Sulle versioni dei tragici greci in Italia (1900–1960). Traduttori e traduzioni," *Aevum* 74: 833–74.
- (2000b) "Il 'Ciclope' di Sbarbaro," in Elli, E./Langella, G. (eds.) (2000) *Studi di letteratura italiana in onore di Francesco Mattesini*. Milano: Vita & Pensiero, 363–97.
- (2005) *Sbarbaro e i tragici greci*. Milano: Vita & Pensiero.

Appendix: List of Modern Adaptations

* This appendix includes the ‘modern’ adaptations that are discussed either fully or to a certain degree in each chapter (titles only listed as an example are not included). By ‘modern’ we here mean all the remakes/adaptations dated from the Middle Ages to the present days. The adaptations (of any kind, including visual arts) are listed according to the adaptor’s names (i.e., authors, artists, composers [rather than librettists], dancers, directors [or, at times, theatre companies]) arranged in alphabetic order. With a few exceptions, translations are not included in this appendix.

Alcestis

- [Anonymous] *Alcestis or Euripides Destroyed* (1866) 354–5
Browning, Robert. *Balaustion’s Adventure* (1871) 357–60
Eliot, Thomas Stearns. *The Cocktail Party* (1949) 363–5
Gluck, Christoph Willibald. *Alceste* (1767) 370–1
Händel, George Friedrich. *Admeto, re di Tessaglia* (1719) 370–1
Hughes, Ted. *Alcestis* (1999, 2000) 365–8
Lovecraft, Howard Philip/Lovecraft Sonia Haft Greene. *Alcestis* (1985) 360–1
Lully, Jean-Baptiste. *Alceste ou le triomphe d’Hercule* (1674) 370–1
Morris, William. *The Love of Alcestis* (1868) 355–6
Palgrave, Francis Turner. *Alcestis* (1871) 356–7
Peyron, Jean-François. *The Death of Alcestis* (1785) 370
Styrke, Issachar. *Alcestis Burlesqued* (1816) 350–1
Talfourd, Francis. *Alcestis, The Original Strong-Minded Woman: A Classical Burlesque, A Most shameless Misinterpretation of the Greek Drama of Euripides* (1850) 351–3
Wieland, Christoph Martin. *Alceste* (1773) 370–1
Wilder, Thornton. *Alcesteiad* (1955) 361–3
Wilson, Robert. *Alcestis* (1986) 371–2
Yourcenar, Marguerite. *Le mystère d’Alceste* (1944) 352 n. 11

Andromache (see also *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, below)

- Aureli, Aurelio. *Gli amori infruttuosi di Pirro* (1661) 159
——— *Gli scherzo di Fortuna: subordinato al Pirro* (1662) 159
——— *Ermione riacquistata* (1683) 159–60
Bentley, Eric. *A Time to Live* (1967) 165–8
Bruckner, Ferdinand. *Pyrrhus and Andromache* (1952) 168
d’Averara, Pietro. *Andromaca* (1701) 160–1
Ek, Mats. *Andromaque* (2001–2002) 165

- Guérin, Baron Pierre-Narcisse. *Andromaque et Pyrrhus* (1810) 157–8
 Guido delle Colonne. *Historia destructionis Troiae* (Ch. 34) (1272–1287) 147–9
 Haym, Nicola Francesco. *Astianatte* (1727) 160–1
 Heudon, Jean. *Pyrrhe* (1598) 149–50
 Heywood, Thomas. *Iron Age 2* (1632) 150–1
 Paisiello, Giovanni. *L'Andromaca* (1797) 162
 Percheron, Luc. *Pyrrhe* (1592) 149
 Pitra, Louis-Guillaume. *Andromaque* (1780) 162
 Racine, Jean. *Andromaque* (1667) 151–7
 Raine, Craig. 1953: *A version of Racine's Andromaque* (1991) 168–70
 Rossini, Gioachino. *Ermione* (1819) 162–4
 Safer, Daniel. *In a Hall in the Palace of Pyrrhus* (2005) 165
 Salvi, Antonio. *Astianatte* (1701) 160–1
 Terzago, Ventura. *L'Ermione* (1680) 160
 Zeno, Apostolo. *Andromaca* (1724) 161

Bacchant Women

- [Uncertain author] *Christus Patiens* (12th century ?) 511
 Akalaitis, Joanne. *Bacchant Women* (2009) 533
 Baxter, James K. *Mr O'Dwyer's Dancing Party* (1968) 535, 536
 Blackburn, Thomas. *Bacchae* (1958) 521
 Bolt, Robert. *Gentle Jack* (1963, 1965) 534
 Boultenhouse, Charles. *Dionysus* (1963) 539
 Bowen, John. *The Disorderly Women* (1969) 535, 536
 Churchill, Caryl/Lan, David. *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986) 537
 Clemente, Nicholas A. *Dionysus in New York* (2008) 520–1
 Daniele da Volterra, *Smembramento di Penteo* (ca. 1548–1550) 523
 Davie, Donald. *Agave in the West* (1961) 522
 Day, Richard Edwin. *The Conquest of Thebes* (1909) 521
 de Palma, Brian. *Dionysus 69* (1970) 539
 Doolittle, Hilda (H.D.). *Choros Translation from The Bacchae* (1931) 513
 Dörtz, Daniel. *Backanterna* (1991) 524
 Duffy, Maureen. *Rites* (1969) 535, 536
 (Duke) d'Orléans, Philippe. *Penthée* (1703) 524
 Ferroni, Giorgio. *Le baccanti* (1961) 539
 Finkel, Donald. *Chorus of the Drunken Women* (1959) 521–2
 Ghedini, Federico. *Le Baccanti* (1948) 524
 Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies* (1954) 517–8, 538
 Greig, David. *The Bacchae* (2007) 515–6, 532–3
 Grüber, Klaus-Michael. *Bakchen* (1974) 530–1

- Hall, Peter. *Bacchae* (2002) 530, 532
- Henze, Hans Werner. *The Bassarids* (1966) 525, 536
- Holst, Gustav. *Hymn to Dionysus* (1913) 524
- Inge, William. *Picnic* (1953) 527
- Iwaszkiewicz, Jarosław. *Dionizje* (1922) 521
- Jarvis, Simon. *Dionysus Crucified* (2011) 521
- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Women on Cythæron* (1928) 521
- Jennings, Brian K. *Rave. The Bacchae of Euripides—Remixed* (2003) 526
- Kneehigh Theatre. *The Bacchae* (2004) 537
- Koun, Karolos. *Bacchant Women* (1977) 530
- Langhoff, Matthias. *Bacchae* (1997) 530
- Love, Harry. *Hūrai* (2011) 536–7
- Mahon, Derek. *The Bacchae* (1991, 2002) 514
- Mays, Brad. *The Bacchae* (2002) 539
- Mee, Charles. *The Bacchae 2.1* (1993) 537
- Milgate, Rodney. *A Refined Look at Existence* (1966) 535, 536
- Mills, Peter. *The Rockae* (2007) 526
- Morrison, Conall. *The Bacchae of Baghdad* (2006) 536
- Murray, Gilbert. *Bacchae* (verse-translation, 1904) 512–3
- Orton, Joe. *The Erpingham Camp* (1966) 534–5
- Partch, Harry. *Revelation in the Courthouse Park* (1961) 525–6
- Pavesi, Stefano. *I baccanali* (1807) 524
- Renault, Mary. *The Mask of Apollo* (1966) 518–9
- Rissik, Andrew. *Dionysus* (2003) 537
- Schechner, Richard. *Dionysus 69* (1968–1969) 528–9
- Seferis, George. *Pentheus* (1954) 521
- Sharman, Jim. *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973) 526
- Shaw, George Bernard. *Major Barbara* (1905, 1907) 512–3, 536, 538
- Somoza, José Carlos. *La caverna de las ideas* (2000) 519–20
- Soyinka, Wole. *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973) 535–6
- Stambouloupoulos, Giorgios. *Two Suns in the Sky* (1991) 539
- Suzuki, Tadashi. *Bacchant Women* (1978) 529
- . *Dionysus* (1990–) 529
- Swinburne, Charles. *Tiresias* (1871) 521
- Szymanowski, Karol. *Król Roger* (1926) 524–5
- Tartt, Donna. *The Secret History* (1992) 519
- Teevan, Colin. *Bacchai* (2002) 514–5, 532
- Terzopoulos, Theodoros. *Bacchant Women* (1986) 529–30
- Testore, Lidia. *Baccante* (1917) 524
- The Bacchanals. *The Bacchae by Euripides* (2003) 532

- The Who. *Tommy* (1969) 526
 Tiffany, John. *Bacchae* (2007) 532–3
 Travis, Roy. *The Black Bacchantes* (1982) 536
 Walker, Ché. *The Lightning Child* (2013) 538
 Walker, Ernest. *Hymn to Dionysus* (1906) 524
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- Bononcini, Giovanni. *Polifemo* (1702) 612
 Chrestien, Florent. *Cyclops* (published in Isaac Casaubon, *De Satyrica Graecorum et Romanorum Satira* (1605) 609
 Ciulli, Roberto. *Zyklops* (1978) 616–7
 Händel, George Friedrich. *Acis and Galatea* (1718) 612
 Kachler, Karl Gottlif. *Cyclops* (1936–1946) 616
 Lully, Jean-Baptiste. *Acis et Galatée* (1686) 611
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